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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed knowledgeable persons in 37 countries in order to describe, from an international perspective, toy libraries and lekoteks serving children with disabilities. The study showed that there are more than 4,500 toy libraries or lekoteks in 31 countries, with preliminary planning activities taking place in still more countries. Three major types of toy libraries emerged: (1) toy libraries that are community based and provide toy loan and services to any child or family; (2) lekoteks that cater almost exclusively to children with special needs; and (3) toy libraries that have a social and cultural program and provide recreational facilities for children of all ages. After a brief description of the study, the major portion of the document consists of reports from the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Korea, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Ireland, Seychelles, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United States, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. A chapter discussing the study's findings is followed by a listing of 42 references. (DB)

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TOY LIBRARIES AND LEKOTEK IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EVA BJÖRCK-ÅKESSON

JANE BRODIN

ISSN: 1100-9047

Rapporter inom handikappområdet
Reports from the Handicap Research Group
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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF JÖNKÖPING
HANDICAP RESEARCH GROUP

ABSTRACT

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JANE BRODIN
THE WRP GROUP

TOY LIBRARIES AND LEKOTEK IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Report No 11, 1991 ISSN: 1100-9047

The purpose of this study is to describe toy libraries and lekoteks in an international perspective. The objectives for carrying out the study is to compile a comprehensive description of the toy libraries and lekoteks throughout the world. The study is based on a questionnaire and information material from 37 countries. Link persons in the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) in these countries have submitted the information. As a complement interviews have been carried out with some link persons.

The result of this study shows that there are toy libraries or lekoteks in 31 countries, and there are also activities that may develop into toy libraries in some countries. Toy libraries and lekoteks and similar activities in 37 countries are described. Three major types of toy libraries emerge:
* Toy libraries that are community based and provide toy loan and advice
and other services to any child or family.
* Lekoteks that cater almost exclusively for children with special needs.
* Toy libraries that have a social and cultural program
and provide recreational facilities for children of all ages.

A fourth broad category may be added, i.e. the kind of toy library that only functions as a toy lending library.

The general goal for all toy libraries and lekoteks is to nurture good and healthy development through play. Toy libraries are beneficial to children and families in society in this respect, building on theme work to achieve this goal. Play and toys are instruments used to share experiences and to communicat and provides an introduction to social relations.

Key words: Toy libraries, lekotek, children, children with special needs, play, toys, developmetal assessment, traditional play and games.

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Foreword

WRP International (Women Researchers in Play and Disability) is an organization researching the field of play and disability. WRP International was founded at the Fourth International Conference of Toy Libraries in Toronto in May of 1987. The aim of the organization is;

- * to work for international cooperation between women in the field of children and handicaps and to enhance international sharing of experiences and knowledge,
- * to work for increased opportunities for children with handicaps to play in different ways and in different environments,
- * to increase the status of play,
- * to demonstrate the importance of a child's spontaneous play,
- * to arrange seminars and courses in the field of children's play and development,
- * to stress, through projects and publications, the importance of play for children with handicaps,
- * to enhance the field of play by initiating research and developmental work.

Today, five women are involved in WRP International: four from Sweden and one from the USA. The members are Eva Björck-Åkesson, Jane Brodin, Greta Hellberg, Marianne Lindberg and Mary Sinker, representing a broad competence in the area of children, child development, children with handicaps and play. This competence is practical as well as theoretical and includes research on children with motor disabilities, children with mental retardation and multiple handicaps, early stimulation, communication development and early interaction, and development of educational programs and play.

The first international project undertaken by WRP International is a survey of toy libraries/ lekoteks in an international perspective. This project has been conducted at the University College of Jönköping. Part of this project has been an investigation of the state of the art of Swedish lekoteks published by WRP International. The first publication in the international investigation is a book "Play is for all" which was presented at the fifth international conference on toy libraries in Turin, Italy, 1990. The project is funded by the National Swedish Inheritance Fund.

Professionals and volunteers who work in toy libraries and similar enterprises have both answered a questionnaire and sent a large amount of information. Some have sent published material on toy libraries whereas others have given their own report or sent brochures about the toy libraries in their country. We want to express our deep felt gratitude to everybody who has contributed!

THE WRP GROUP

Jönköping, February, 1991

Eva Björck-Åkesson and Jane Brodin

Chapter 1

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is a survey of toy libraries/lekoteks, carried out with the goal of producing a document that describes the international toy library movement today. The toy library concept generally includes both toy libraries and lekoteks. However, the difference between the two will be illuminated in this study. In general the term toy library is used and the term lekotek when it is especially called for. The objectives for carrying out this survey are multiple, the most important being to publicize the toy library movement, and to give toy library staff, both professional and volunteer, a means for demonstrating the possibilities, impact and benefits of toy libraries. The aim is to compile a comprehensive description of the toy libraries/lekoteks throughout the world.

According to the proposal for constitution of the International Toy Library Association (ITLA), which was discussed in Turin in November, 1990:

> *"1. A toy library is a service that provides members with the opportunity for shared play and the loan of toys. A toy library can be operated by individuals, charitable organizations, local, regional or national governments, or any other such agency or group. Members of toy libraries can be children, parents, grandparents, childcare providers, educators and/or school children, hospital staff and/or patients, or any other person or persons interested in toys and play.*
>
> *2. Toy libraries, as often as possible, are to serve as a community resource, offereng information, guidance and support to members in addition to the loan of toys.*
>
> *3. Toy libraries serve people without regard of race, sex, age, handicap, religion, language, or natural origin." (p.1)*

However, there is no standard definition of toy library/lekotek, and many different programs come under those headings. It is the exciting challenge of this study to discover the kinds of activities that are described as toy libraries and lekoteks. In starting this investigation, it was planned to sort the toy library activities into distinct categories. After receiving answers to a questionnaire and informational material on the toy libraries, however, it became clear that any standardized description of toy libraries would be impossible.

One of the results of this study will be, however, a deepened knowledge of the philosophies, aims and activities of toy libraries, and a discovery of the possibility of stating a common philosophy common to toy libraries in different countries which covers more than the very general description of the aims and functions of toy libraries found in the proposal for constitution for ITLA.

1.1 Background

The oldest toy library in the world would appear to be the Los Angeles County Toy Loan program in Los Angeles, California, USA (Mayfield, 1990). This program started in the economic depression years of the 1930's, and has been in operation ever since then. However, interest in the toy library concept spread much faster throughout Europe than in it did in America (Elkins, Calder, Conrad, Shepherd, Coulston & Willis, 1981; Marshall, 1981; Westland & Knight, 1982). The lekotek concept was founded in Sweden and Scandinavia over 25 years ago (Björck-Åkesson, Brodin, Hellberg & Lindberg, 1988, Stensland Junker, 1971, 1975). The first lekotek for children with handicaps was opened in Stockholm by concerned parents and teachers of children with handicaps. The first lekotek in Norway was started at about the same time (Juul, 1984). In England the first toy library was established more than 20 years ago (deVincentis, 1984; Lindberg, Björck-Åkesson & Brodin, 1988; Stensland Junker, 1975). The growth of toy libraries/lekoteks has been rapid during the last decade. Today there are toy libraries/lekoteks throughout the world in industrial as well as developing countries

To describe a toy library in general terms is difficult, because the culture and social system of the country influence the toy library system that is developed. Common to all toy libraries is the emphasis on play as a means for development, and the work of enthusiastic toy librarians, professional or volunteer, who have taken on the challenge of making play available and beneficial to parents, children and society (Björck-Åkesson, 1988; Head & Walker, 1987; Nimnicht & Brown, 1972; Rub, 1987; Sinker, 1985).

Although the words toy library and lekotek sometimes are used synonymously, it is necessary to make a distinction between the concepts (Björck-Åkesson, 1988; Domroese, 1985; Gentleman, 1983; Pryor, 1977). When the word lekotek is used, children with handicaps are usually the focus for the services offered (Edmonds, 1985; Lear, 1986; Moon, 1983; Sinker, 1985; Stensland Junker, 1971, 1975). There is also an emphasis on individual training of the child and parent by a well-trained special education teacher, called a lekotek leader (deVincentis, 1984; Juul, 1984; Pryor, 1977; Sinker, 1985; Stensland Junker, 1971, 1975). Lekoteks are often affiliated with a habilitation center or diagnostic and treatment center as a part of the assessment and educational services offered by the center (Björck-Åkesson, 1988; Elkins et al., 1985; McLane, 1986). Lekoteks are most often for preschool children, and many lekoteks concentrate on the very young child. At lekotek the use of play and toys are adapted to each child's special needs (Duff et al, 1978; Jeffrey et al, 1981; Johnson, 1978; Sinker, 1985; Stensland Junker, 1971, 1975). The role of the lekotek leader is to improve each child's potential through the use of play. The lekotek concept in its original form has mainly found expression in the Scandinavian countries. Other countries that have adapted this concept are Australia, Japan and Korea (Björck-Åkesson, 1988). In many other countries, such as the United States, some of the toy library programs have this form, but in combination or parallel with other forms (Sinker, 1985).

The word toy library refers to a library for toys where the role of the toy librarian is to find toys and games that are beneficial to children of different ages. Toys and games may enhance communication and cooperation between children, between children and parents and also between families (Björck-Åkesson & Fälth, 1988; Brodin, 1986, 1989; Brodin & Björck-Åkesson, 1990; Lehnhoff, 1976). However, today toy libraries have a much wider function than merely lending toys. The proceedings (Cohen & von Levetzow, 1987) of the 4th international conference of toy libraries in Toronto 1987 show that toy libraries have a role in many different areas, such as family support, mental health, helping children at risk, in bringing play back to its cultural roots, or simply giving handicapped or non-handicapped children a place to meet and play. This wider role for toy libraries has called into question the very name toy library. In some countries alternative names have been adapted. For example, the British toy library organization now is called "Play Matters", and in Canada many toy libraries have grown into "Family Resource Centers".

To simplify the descriptions in this report, the word toy library is used in general and sometimes synonymously with the word lekotek. In those countries where the lekotek concept is especially emphasized this word only is used.

A good measure of the growth of the toy library movement is the increasing number of national associations for toy libraries and newletters produced in different countries. The Canadian Association of toy libraries has published a newsletter for more than ten years (Canadian Association of Toy Libraries, 1986; Mayfield, 1988). Great Britain has the publication PLAY MATTERS, published by The National Toy Libraries Association. In France the newsletter "Ludo" is published quarterly by the French Toy Library Association. In the United States the first issue of "Child's Play" was published in 1984 by the USA Toy Library Association. "Ludo Journal" is the name of the newsletter published by the Swiss association of toy libraries. In Italy the newsletter "La Ludoteca" is published by the Italian Committee for Children's Play and in Sweden the newsletter Idébanken, or "bank of ideas" is published by the Swedish Lekotek Association. In Korea the newsletter Lekotek Korea has been published since 1987. Recently, the first Brazilian newsletter, Briquedoteca, has been published. In Florence, Italy, Giorgio Bartolucci, who is the Italian Link person, has begun developing an International Center for the Documentation of Toy Libraries, where information about toy libraries throughout the world is collected, and the newsletters are very important pieces of that documentation (Björck-Åkesson, 1988; Garagnani, 1987).

1.2 International cooperation

In 1978 the First International Toy Library conference was arranged in London, England by the English Toy Library Association. The theme of the conference was "Toy Library Is Teamwork". This conference attracted 180 delegates from 21 different countries. The question of an international organization for Toy Libraries/Lekoteks was raised here (Head & Walker, 1987). Special praise was given at this conference to Sweden for being the first country to introduce the lekotek concept for children with disabilities.

Sweden took the initiative of arranging the Second International Conference of Toy Libraries in Stockholm in 1981. The theme of this conference was "Toy Library In Society". 230 delegates representing 30 different countries participated. The objective for this conference was to share knowledge and to give specialists and Toy library/lekotek staff possibilities of exchanging experiences and making study visits. The Stockholm conference was seen as a Swedish contribution to the International Year of the Handicapped, proclaimed by the United Nations. It was a result of this conference that the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) was established.

The Third International Conference of Toy Libraries was arranged in Brussels, Belgium, in 1984. The theme for this conference was "Play Is A Language", and it attracted 250 delegates from 30 countries. The focus of this conference was research and presentations about how the toy library/lekotek concept was implemented in different countries.

In 1987 the Fourth International Conference of Toy Libraries was held in Toronto, Canada. Here the theme was "Sharing Through Play". 20 nations were represented by 200 delegates. The five top topics of this conference were how toy libraries/lekoteks are organized and how they function, the process of parenting and parent support, toys, children in need of special support and the status of play. An emphasis on family support was expressed and emphasized as a main objective for toy libraries/lekoteks.

In 1990, the Fifth International Conference on Toy Libraries was held in Turin, Italy. The theme for the conference was "Play Is For All". About 400 delegates represented 35 countries from all continents. The programme contained about 80 sessions, and examples of themes are; integration, traditional toys and games as opposed to commersialized toys and games, the healing power of play, play in psychotheraphy and play and games for children with handicap. The value of artistic activities and the importance of animation was in focus, and the ambition for the Italian Ludothecs' to give children many possibilities for expression and communication was illuminated.

At the fourth international conference Dr Roy McConkey from Ireland suggested that although toy libraries are an artifact of developed, affluent societies, this should not be the case because toy libraries offer much more than toys. Above all, toy libraries promote the attitude that play is a way to enhance communication and cooperation, and helps the growing generation to work for peace and a harmonious world. Play is a moderator of the child's development, and there is a great need for play for all children. (Björck-Åkesson & Fälth, 1988; Brodin & Lindberg, 1987; Jeffrey et al, 1981; Lear, 1986; Newson & Newson, 1979; Stensland Junjer, 1975). One of the most interesting aspects of this international survey is learning more about toy libraries in the developing countries.

The international conferences have been great successes, not only because of the number of participants and the high quality presentations, but also for the opportunities offered for professionals and volunteers to meet colleagues from the toy libraries/lekoteks throughout the world. The International Toy Library Association (ITLA) has grown stronger during the years as a result of these conferences.

ITLA has been working on the formulation of an international constitution which can facilitate links to other international organizations, such as UNICEF and OMEP. This constitution was discussed and passed on the 5th International Conference of Toy Libraries in Turin. Another important issue is raising international funds to make cooperation possible in the future. An international committee of six persons has been appointed to coordinate the work of ITLA. In every country with a toy library a link person, who is responsible for international contacts, has been appointed. The national link person's role is to gather information for the international newsletter and to disseminate international news in her/his own country.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to compile a description of the toy libraries/lekoteks throughout the world. This study will give a description of the state of the art in the toy library/lekotek movement. Future perspectives and development possibilities will be discussed, as well as similarities and differences between toy libraries/lekoteks in different countries.

2. METHOD

To start the international investigation, a letter was sent to all link persons, to a number of known toy librarians and to some personal contacts in all countries known to have toy libraries, with a request to send an address list of the toy libraries of their country. Addresses were collected from the list of link persons in ITLA's international newsletter, from the proceedings of the international conferences and from personal sources. Some embassies were also contacted for addresses. In all letters were sent to 65 addresses.

A short questionnaire was sent to all link persons and other contacts, with questions on how, by whom and when the first toy library was started in the country, the main objectives of the toy libraries in the country, the organization of the toy libraries, how many toy libraries/lekoteks there are in the country, who is eligible for the service, group activities, localities and staff etc. This general questionnaire (see appendix 1) was intended to result in an overview of the organization of the toy libraries/lekoteks in the different countries. The persons contacted were also requested to send written information such as brochures and pamphlets.

To those who did not respond to the first request for information, two or three further requests were forwarded. Letters were also sent to the presidents of OMEP in countries that had not answered the first letter, with a request to forward the information to informed persons. In all, about 200 letters were sent to persons in about 70 countries. The original letter was in English, and translated into German, French and Spanish. The study covers lekoteks/toy libraries and activities that may develop into toy libraries in 37 countries.

In order to receive more information on toy libraries a search was made in the databases PsycLIT and ERIC. The search was based on the following key words: toy, library, toy library, play, play library, lekotek, ludoteka. The search resulted in 66 references covering the years 1966 to 1989. Of those references, only a few were relevant to the present study.

Some countries have sent elaborate documentation such as books, reports, photos and research about toy libraries. Some have sent complete personal descriptions of the toy libraries in the country. Others have sent a letter that describes the toy library in a short and formal way, and others have answered the short questionnaire and sent addresses to the toy libraries in the country. From some countries we have received a large amount of unstructured material. Information from newsletters, publications such as articles in journals and also brochures and pamphlets has also been used as a basis for the investigation. Personal visits in combination with written material are the basis for the description from a few countries. Some material reached us later than our final deadline (in August -90). However, major changes could not be done at that time.

Even though there exist an international commitment with states the general objectives for toy libraries it is difficult define what a toy library is. The definition of what a toy library is varies in different countries because circumstances in different countries vary enormously. In order to fully understand the organization of the toy libraries in a country, a basic knowledge of the organization of the social welfare system, child care system, habilitation system and the culture is essential. It is beyond the scope of this study to make a deeper analysis of those issues. This survey is based solely on the material received.

Some countries have submitted descriptions of programs similar to toy libraries. Those descriptions have been included, since new development often springs from such activities. Some of those countries may wish to build up toy libraries, but do not have the economic requisites to do so.

Countries that have the ambition of starting programs similar to toy libraries can benefit from this report. They may use it to obtain ideas about how to organize their program and to inform authorities about toy libraries in other countries and how children, parents and society as a whole may benefit.

2.1 Organisation of the description of toy libraries/lekoteks

In the following chapters toy libraries and lekoteks and some programs similar to toy libraries in different countries are described in alphabetic order. In the beginning of each section information about the person/persons who have submitted the information about toy libraries/lekoteks is given. The structure of the description of each country varies depending on the amount and format of the information submitted. A thorough description of the toy libraries in some countries and more general descriptions of others is unavoidable with respect to the material received. The description of the toy libraries is followed by an analysis and discussion.

Chapter 3

3. DESCRIPTION OF TOYLIBRARIES/LEKOTEKS

3.1 Argentina

Information about toy libraries in Argentina has come from several sources: Inga Ploetz, founder and director of Bibambi, a small toy library; Maria Cantoni, Assistant Professor at the Universidad del Museo Social Argentino, and Ann Aylward, Citicorp Lekotek liaison.

Toy libraries are a new concept in Argentina, and as such are still developing and defining their services. There are three kinds of toy libraries currently in operation: school toy libraries, Bibambi and Lekotek.

Many municipal schools in Buenos Aires have toy libraries. The play activities take place inside the school, and in each school the focus is slightly different. Some schools work with the children's mothers, giving them the training and guidance to play with children. In some, children leave their classrooms once or twice a week for a play hour..

Bibambi is a small toy library for children with handicaps founded and operated by Inga Ploetz, an audiology specialist. Bibambi helps parents of children with special needs to learn to play with their children, and to get together with other parents and children. It is also available for children in hospital or convalescing. The purposes of Bibambi are to operate a book and toy library for children and educators, to establish a center where parents and teachers can get information and advice on the education of children with handicaps, to promote the integration of handicapped people into society, and to offer legal advice for people with handicaps. Bibambi believes that to play is to enjoy, to create, to communicate, to express and to unfold mentally. Everyone needs to play, but for children, play is the way to learn and grow.

In 1990, Citicorp Bank has established a national Lekotek center in Buenos Aires. Based on the Swedish lekotek model, the lekotek leaders in Argentina received training at the National Lekotek Center in the United States.

Operating from a beautifully rehabilitated house in Buenos Aires, Lekotek provides specially adapted toys and materials to children with any kind of special need, whether physical or mental, short or long term. Economically disadvantaged children are also a focus of this first lekotek.

As is true of the Swedish model, Lekotek in Argentina provides counseling and support to the families of children with special needs. Visits with a lekotek leader are made by appointment, and toys are specially chosen to stimulate developmental progress. Perhaps most important, toys and play help parents and children to play together, thus integrating the child into the family and the family into society.

Citicorp Bank intends to fund this Lekotek center for two to three years, and after that hopes that the center will be able to carry on this important mission on its own.

3.2 Australia

Australia is a large continent with a topography that offers different starting points and possibilities for running toy libraries. A great deal of material about toy libraries in Australia was received from different sources

The political system in Australia operates on a system of central Federal Government and from there a delegation of responsibility to the 7 State Governments, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania. The size of the continent, exacerbating the tyranny of distance, the diversity of climate, topography and the rich multi cultural mix of people, present an interesting and challenging task.

Toy libraries in Australia range from:

* helicopter services to remote lighthouses
* road train services to families living in remote outback areas who may be cut off by flood waters for weeks at a time
* coastal and fishing boat services to families living on islands on the coast
* local families living in one street joining together to provide mutual support to each other and wide variety of equipment for their children.

In between there are toy libraries run from and for:

* community groups
* maternal and child health centres
* local councils
* public libraries
* schools
* kindergartens
* hospitals
* groups related to children with special needs
* teenagers and leisure libraries

In 1981 the national Office of Child Care in Australia initiated a national survey of existing toy libraries. The report showed that Australian toy libraries vary both in organization and types of children they serve. Toy libraries for handicapped children have developed at the same time as toy libraries for non-handicapped children.

From the short inquiry it is evident that there are about 600 toy libraries in Australia, including about 50 mobile units. In the state of Victoria there are about 150 toy libraries. The organization of the toy libraries is at National level, at state level or at library level. The main objectives of toy libraries are to provide play opportunities and play material and to give advice and support to parents and children. Group activities are arranged for children and their parents. The Australian Association of Toy Libraries has been in existence for 14 years. It aims to promote communication and networks between toy libraries and with other sections by production of a quarterly journal, regular seminars and conferences. Of the 7 Australian states 3, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, have active Toy Library Associations.

The range of services that a toy library can provide is extensive. Naturally many of the smaller libraries are not in a position to provide all of them. The scope of activities include: loans to individual children and groups, mobile distribution, loans to professionals, special activities for children and parent support services. Promoting general public awareness of the needs of the children in the community is also an objective for the toy libraries. The toy libraries are located in preschools, schools, social services, hospitals, mobile units, libraries or assessment centers. The libraries are staffed by both professionals and volunteers and include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, kindergarten teachers, speech therapists, social workers and teachers.

Most of the material received describes toy libraries for children with handicaps, particularly the Noah's Ark program, which is a community based resource unit for handicapped children and their families in the State of Victoria. The following description of toy libraries for handicapped children is taken from a brochure published by the Australian Association for Toy Libraries for the Handicapped, which was provided by Annetine Forell.

Toy libraries for handicapped children do more than lend toys.They provide a place where handicapped children and their families can find ways to develop potential, cope with day-to-day problems and simply relax in a friendly, informal setting. The toys, central to the library's operation, provide challenging learning experiences and give the children outlets for their frustrations, fantasies and self expression.

Toy libraries for children with handicaps provide many services, including:

* Loaning toys and equipment to individual handicapped people or groups of people who are able to visit the toy library.
* Loaning toys and equipment through a mail distribution service or a mobile toy bus/van service to people who are unable to visit the library.
* Loaning toys and equipment to professional workers who are involved with the handicapped, for use at the library or within their own treatment and therapy centers, care centers or hospitals.
* Conducting special activities
* Providing parent support services, discussion groups, seminars, films, video tapes, information services, newsletters, babysitting.
* Organizing social activities involving toy library members their parents, brothers, sisters and friends.
* Promoting general public awareness of the needs of the handicapped in the community.
* Acting as a resource for field studies for students from various disciplines e.g. occupational therapy, child care, infant welfare, special education.

The aims of the toy libraries for children with handicaps are as follows:

* To assist the development of all handicapped people, whatever their disabilities.
* To provide intervention at the earliest possible stage
* To provide family resource centers and professional advisory services for handicapped children and their families.
* To make available a wide range of appropriate toys and equipment.
* To foster an understanding of the need for play and recreation in the development of the handicapped.

Specialist toy libraries for children with handicaps have the important role of preventive health, providing a bridge between the clinical and home environments.

The Australian Association of Toy Libraries for the Handicapped has been in existence for eleven years. At present there are around 100 member libraries throughout Australia. The

Association aims to promote communication between toy libraries and with other sections of the community.

While much of the information received concerns specialist toy libraries for children with handicaps, there are a large number of toy libraries in Australia that cater for children who are developing normally, mainly in community based facilities. These libraries are independent organizations initiated and run by interested people in the communities. Funding for these is provided by a variety of sources, including membership and loan fees, support from commercial enterprises and, sometimes Commonwealth, State or Local Government funding. Some libraries operate from a relatively stable financial base for many others their future is at best precarious.

Annetine Forell concludes that the Australian trend within the toy library movement is towards the integration of specialist libraries with generic services. This cource has been vigourously pursued by discussions, and seminars. She claims that there is a real place for both services on a continuum of toy library services; at one end the specialist library funded and with a range of experienced paediatric therapists and at the other end a local voluntary group.

3.3 Belgium

Jean-Pierre Cornelissen, chairman of the International Toy Library Association, has submitted material about toy libraries in French speaking Belgium.

The history of the toy libraries in French speaking Belgium starts at Marche-en-Famenne in the Province of Luxembourg in 1972. The local county council was inspired by a French toy library in Dijon, created in 1968. Other public authorities also got interested in the new social and cultural service center. In Brussels the Commission Francaise de la Culture first assisted the town councils in creating toy libraries. In cases where the town councils were not interested, the Commission helped private organizations to start toy libraries. The number of toy libraries increased gradually with more and various activities, and also spread to other areas. As seen in table 1 the number of toy libraries has increased steadily during the past 5-year period.

According to the latest available statistics on toy libraries,75% are found in towns of more than 5.000 inhabitants, while 3% are in villages having less than 1.000 inhabitants. Nearly half (48%) have been created by private initiative, 26% have cooperation of public services with the organizers, and 26% are controlled by public services and financed by public authorities.

The premises of the toy libraries are generally not very large. The average toy library has about 450 toys and games. Toy libraries have sometimes faced difficulties with local authorities because not everyone in the administration is aware of the importance of toy libraries.

In French speaking Belgium, LUDO is the name of the toy library Association. This association is a non-profit organization. It has several aims, among them to promote toy libraries, provide toy libraries with necessary information and cooperation, and to organize events such as conferences. LUDO has also started to organize the training of the people who staff the toy libraries.

Table 1. Toy libraries in French speaking Belgium

Region	1985	1989
Brussels	23	28
Brabant Wallon	12	14
Hainaut	23	27
Liege	12	20
Namur	30	30
Luxembourg	12	18
Belgian army forces in West Germany		1
Total	112	138

The greatest achievement of LUDO was the sponsorship of the 3rd International Conference of Toy Libraries in May, 1984. The theme for this conference was "Play is a language". More than 370 participants from 32 countries and from the five continents attended. Nearly 70 speakers, both in plenary sessions and in workshops showed the usefulness and impact of toy libraries and how diverse the activities really are.

Jean-Pierre Cornelissen concludes that more than 15 years of toy libraries in Belgium have brought the conclusion that things are never completed; improvements are always possible. A toy library must be able to adapt itself to new needs and situations.

3.4 Brazil

Toy libraries are called Brinquedotecas in Brazil.Information about brinquedotecas has been sent by Nylse Silva Cunha and Violeta Fagundes, both of whom are closely involved in the toy library movement in Brazil.Additional information was received from Ann Aylward, Lekotek Citicorp Liaison.

The first toy library in Brazil was organized in 1982.APAE, the Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional, began the first toy library in order to supplement the education of children with handicaps. This initiative was followed by the creation of six public toy libraries by the government of Sao Paulo. Toy libraries in Brazil have many functions, as diverse as the needs of the people they serve, and new activities and plans are made every month.

Brazil has many different kinds of toy libraries.Some of them are attached to public libraries, others to schools and some belong to institutions for exceptional children. There are some toy libraries in the "favelas" (ghettos where very poor people live). A toy library is part of the Department of Education at the University of Sao Paulo. There is even a toy library in a circus! This is a cultural circus that travels in the interior of the country.In those toy libraries, children come to play but it is not usual to take toys to their homes.

Basically, the toy libraries fall into the following general categories:

1 Pedagogical Brinquedoteca: These libraries have materials used and borrowed by teachers.
2 School Brinquedoteca: These libraries are in a sector of the school, and pupils come to play as well as to choose games to take home.
3 Loaning Brinquedoteca: These function as a circulating library, loaning toys for children to take home for predetermined periods.
4 Therapeutic Brinquedoteca: Children attending a special clinic borrow toys to aid their development. These are staffed by various professionals such as physical therapists, psychologists, educators, and social workers.
5 Hospital Brinquedoteca: These libraries are a department of the hospital, and children who are hospitalized can use them, either to play in the play room if they are able to move, or to have toys in their beds if they must stay in bed.
6 Mobile Brinquedoteca: Mobile libraries are buses that go to various remote regions. The bus has play hours for children to come and play.

Many other types of libraries exist, to meet other needs. All the toy libraries offer a wide range of toys for children of all ages, and offer a safe and welcoming place for children to play. Children come individually or in groups at pre-established times.

Toy libraries count on a multi-disciplinary group to establish the following programs:

* courses and training to work with people from the education and health fields
* set up toy libraries by establishing an inventory of toys
* look after mothers and children with special needs, establishing stimulating, educational play programs
* work with firms on individual projects to help establish corporate programs.

In 1990, Citicorp Bank established a Lekotek center in Sao Paulo. Based on the Swedish lekotek model, the lekotek leaders in Brazil received training at the National Lekotek Center in the United States. Lekotek provides specially adapted toys and materials to children with any kind of special need, whether physical or mental, short or long term.

As is true of the Swedish model, Lekotek in Brazil provides counseling and support to the families of children with special needs. Visits with a lekotek leader are made by appointment, and toys are specially chosen to stimulate developmental progress. Perhaps most important, toys and play help parents and children to play together, thus integrating the child into the family and the family into society.

Citicorp Bank intends to fund this Lekotek center for two to three years, and after that hopes that the center will be able to carry on this important mission on its own.

Economic conditions in Brazil are very difficult, with intense inflation and extreme poverty. In many cases, the toy library provides the only intervention children receive. These children don't have schools or other facilities, so depend on the toy libraries for stimulation and encouragement.

The Associao Brasileira de Brinquedoteca was established in 1988. This association is a young one, and money is a constant problem. Because of a lack of staff, it is unknown just how many toy libraries there are in the country. Perhaps there are 200, perhaps more. Nylse Silva Cunha is talking to the Brazilian Association of Toy Manufacturers to see if there is a possibility of receiving funds for the association, and is being extremely cautious in pursuing this possibility because of the need to remain independent.

Because of the economic and social problems of the country, funding is a major problem. The association has met this challenge by creating its own play materials. It has a display of 200 toys made from throw-away materials.The staff has also prepared a manual about learning and teaching materials which was published by the Ministry of Education. The manual contains a list of learning objectives and a series of over 500 color photos of toys with directions on how to use them to meet the objectives.

Brazil is an enormous country with many natural resources and many problems. The toy library movement is young and growing, led by enthusiastic, dedicated people. It seems certain that toy libraries will have a major impact on the children and families of Brazil.

3.5 Canada

Information about toy libraries in Canada has been obtained from brochures, articles in journals, proceedings from the international conference in Toronto, 1987, and from personal visits. Virginia Taylor, executive director of the Candian Association of Toy Libraries has answered our short inquiry.

The first toy library in Canada is believed to have been started by the Winnipeg Public Library in 1970. Today there are more than 300 toy libraries in Canada. Most of them are open to all children. About one fifth of them cater exclusively to handicapped children.

The main objectives for the toy libraries are to provide play opportunities, socialization, child development and informal therapy. Both professionals and volunteers work at the toy libraries, and include child-care workers, therapists, social workers and librarians. The toy libraries are located at preschools, schools, social service agencies, hospitals, mobile units, libraries, assessment centers and at home day care agencies. Group activities are available such as play groups, workshops, crafts and drama.

Most of the toy libraries serving handicapped children are located at special treatment centers, such as hospitals, residential schools, and infant development centers. The toy library facility is provided to the families as one of the services offered at those centers.

Community-based toy libraries are operated on a public lending library model or a community oriented parent-child resource center model. The toy lending libraries operate on the same principles as a book lending library, with a catalog system and loan periods. The community based toy libraries are often combined with or are part of a parent educational program. The aim of those toy libraries is to teach parents to use toys and play items effectively in order to foster development and interaction and different skills such as cognitive and language skills. The community oriented toy libraries also provide services for disabled preschoolers and cultural minority groups

The Canadian Association of Toy Libraries was established in 1975 at the initiative of Joanna Von Levetzov. It is a strong force in Canada in promoting and supporting the development of different kinds of toy libraries.

Canada is a very large country divided into ten provinces and one territory, with three levels of government; federal, provincial and regional/local. Education, health care and day care is the responsibility of the provincial governments. During the last 15 years there has been a tremendous change in the circumstances of families, with an increase of women in the labor force and changes in family patterns. Many reliable forms of support for parents have disappeared, with the result that new forms of support are being established. One form of support which has evolved from grassroots initiative are the toy libraries, and another is Parent Child Resource Centers. In 1987 the Health and Welfare department granted funds to develop a national network of Toy Libraries and Parent Child Resource Centers, called "Play and Parenting Connections". The role of this organization is to promote the development of family resource programs throughout the country. It is aimed at increasing the public's awareness of Toy Libraries and Parent Child Resource Centers, encouraging young families, single parents, caregivers and those with special needs to share community resources, and promoting the well-being of families in various ways.

The goals of The Canadian Association of Toy Libraries and Parent-Child Resource Centers are described in a recent pamphlet. The program of the association is based on the belief that all families need and desire effective resources for the healthy growth and development of their children.

Toy libraries are described as places where parents and caregivers can meet with each other, watching children play in an unstructured setting with quality toys. Sound advice on their child's changing play needs is available. The toy libraries are committed to the idea that play is an early social and learning experience and that toys are vital ingredients in a child's growth. Toy libraries serve and link families of various backgrounds, cultures and languages, children with special needs and those in rural areas.

Parent Child Resource Centers are located in neighborhoods throughout Canada. Their function is to provide a variety of programs where children, parents and care givers can drop in. The content of the programs and location of the centers varies depending on local circumstances. The aim of the centers is to guide and help parents in developing parenting skills, and to give information to parents and offer possibilities of meeting other parents and sharing experiences. The staff at the centers give the parents help and support and also provide referrals to other community programs if needed.

To be a member of the Canadian Association of Toy Libraries and Parent-Child Resource Centers costs $25 per year. Included in this fee is the cost for the newsletter. The newsletter is published quarterly, and gives regional news, information about parenting resources, reports on programs for children with special needs, has a toy panel report which evaluates toys and also provides book reviews. The association also has a resource library, arranges workshops and conferences and coordinates networks.

3.6 China

A description of toy libraries in China has been provided by professor Yi-Ying Fang, child psychologist and chair of the section of child psychology at the Child Developmental Center of China in Guanyuan in Beijing. He reports that the toy library concept is very new for China, and that so far there are only 7-8 toy libraries in China. The first was started in October, 1988 in Beijing, sponsored by the Beijing Toy Association. Since then, toy libraries have been started in Shanghai and Tianjing. Those three towns are the largest cities in China. Teachers working in the local children's palace and neighborhood communes were responsible for establishing the toy libraries.

The main objective for the toy libraries in China is to offer children from 3-14 years old more opportunities to play and communicate. The toy libraries welcome all children, and group activities are available for children and children and parents together. Toy libraries are located at preschools and at the social service agencies, and also at the toy manufacturers.

Preschool and primary school teachers work at the toy libraries in addition to social workers from local women's federations.

Professor Fang conducted a research project on play and toys for young children in 1989. As a result, the Hailar Prefecture Women's Federation, in Inner Mongolia, helped to set up a toy library for young nomadic children who are on the move in the grasslands with their parents during the late spring and summer seasons. They also assisted the Wu Xi Township of the Tiang Su Province to start a toy library for young rural children. The establishment of the toy libraries was warmly welcomed by the parents, children and all the local people. It attracted attention from the local authorities. An example of the positive attitude of the authorities is that the secretary of the county party in Hailar made a proposal that 30 cattle could be given to the toy library. A woman's group was organized to manage and cultivate the cattle in order to finance the toy library.

Further, Professor Fang reports that this year the research project will continue and more toy libraries for young children and young children with special needs will be organized. In addition, they will attempt to enhance the project for older children. His letter ends with the words, "I am sure that toy libraries will play an important role and have a brilliant future in China."

3.7 Denmark

The toy librarian Mrs Grit Stendrup has reported that the first toy library started in 1970 in Denmark. Today, twenty years later, there are about 40 toy libraries in the whole country. Three are connected to the institution where they are located. The others are open for all children in need of extra stimulation and support. Parents who feel that their child's development needs extra support can apply to a toy library at their own initiative and get the help they desire.

Toy libraries have no national position in Denmark, but are established on a local level. They are administratively connected to the social welfare section or the school governing body in the municipality and county councils. Some toy libraries are connected to treatment centers or government hospitals or institutes for communication. However, there is an increasing number of toy libraries. Parent associations have helped to start many of them.
From a brochure from the Helsingör Legetek

Children with disabilities, whether short or long term, are eligible to use the toy libraries. There is a rich variety of materials available at the Danish toy libraries, used to give children overall stimulation and to train their skills and ability. All kinds of material are used. The goal is to encourage the child's own activities - to help them start playing.

Most of the staff of the toy libraries are preschool teachers or leisure instructors with various special education specialties, such as speech and hearing. It is most important that the toy librarian has a broad educational background. The need for well educated toy librarians is tremendous, as the number of toy libraries are increasing. It is common for staff to work a great deal of overtime in order to meet the needs for help and support.

Most toy libraries in Denmark are open 2-3 times a week. Parents and children come to the toy library by appointment. Some of the staff also visit the family at home as additional support. At some toy libraries there are group activities. Parents, children and staff working with the child are welcome to attend these group activities.

One of the primary goals of Danish toy libraries is to give play guidance to the parents. It is important that parents have an opportunity for discussion with the toy librarian and are able to ask questions about their child's difficulties. They work on an individual basis and borrow adapted materials to meet the needs of each child in order to help the child's development. Another task for the toy librarian is to buy play materials. The costs for this will total about 10,000 - 20,000 DKR a year. Some toy libraries have larger allowances. Using the services at a Danish toy library is free of charge.

Toy library staff do not test or formally assess the children. Rather, the toy librarian listens to the voice of the parent and how they describe their child and makes her own assessment. The family is loaned material to take home to work and play with their child. After some time they return to the toy library for another play session. With this continuous play training the child will develop as far as possible.

In Denmark most toy libraries are members of the toy library association. The association sponsers a two day educational conference every year. This conference also makes it possible for toy librarians from different parts of the country to meet and exchange experiences, as most of them work without colleagues during the rest of the year. In order to be able to develop this important job it is necessary to exchange knowledge.

3.8 The Faroe Islands

From the Farou Islands we have a received a letter from the only toy library on the island. It is sent by Mrs Hanna Lisberg, who is the person responsible for the toy library. In Mrs. Lisberg's words:

"I worked with two other teachers from the special school to raise money for the establishment of a toy library. Since 1981 I have been the only person working with lending and buying new materials on a voluntary basis. No one else was interested in going on working on this basis but I felt I had to. It's a great pleasure and joy. I do hope that the politicians will become aware of the importance of toy libraries for children with disabilities. I work in close connection with educational specialists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and the head physician at the hospital.

I send toys by mail to all of the islands, as many of the children are prescribed toys by the doctors and staff of the children's departments. I have been on a course in Denmark and I receive good support from the Danish toy libraries. The school has contributed a space for the library. However, we do not receive a single penny for administration, so all jobs must be done on a voluntary basis.

The first toy library started in 1981 and is still run by Mrs Hanna Lisberg as a private organization. The Farou Islands have about 45,000 citizens and this is the only toy library on the island. Only children with disabilities are eligible to use the toy library. Most of the children are preschoolers, but older children and adults with mental retardation are welcome to visit the toy library and borrow material. Most of the materials are bought in Sweden and Denmark.

The toy library has been financed by private funds. The first funds were raised by parents and from the income of a special Christmas stamp for charity. Kiwanis and Lions and the scouting movement have also contributed to helping a toy library become a reality on the Faroe Islands.

3.9 Fiji

From Fiji Ms Leslie Norman of Suva has sent a letter. At present there are no toy libraries in Fiji. The Suva Society for the Intellectually Handicapped has tried to persuade banks and other institutions to donate money for this purpose, without success. In Fiji there is an awareness of the great need for such a resource and they are looking for ways to reach a solution.

3.10 Finland

Gerd Sågfors at Folkhälsans Lekotek in Helsinki has provided information about lekoteks in Finland. Lekotek began in Finland in 1967, as a rehabilitation service for Swedish speaking children with handicaps. The original Finnish lekotek leaders were trained in Sweden. As in Sweden, the original Finnish lekoteks were designed with the dual purpose of providing families with information, support and confidence, and loaning toys. Services quickly were expanded to include all children with disabilities. Many of the early lekotek leaders traveled with their services, because the distances some children lived from the center were enormous - up to 800 kilometers.

In 1973 a new law about daycare for children was implemented in Finland, and community based family daycare was established. It became a challenge for the lekoteks to offer the daycare workers advice and educational toys. Daycare in family homes were to be considered qualitatively equal to institutions for daycare, which put great demands on the day care providers. The communities therefore were asked to start lekoteks, primarily for the lending of toys to their family daycare homes. Today this kind of lekotek is to be found in almost every Finnish community.

In a 1978 report the National Social Welfare Board recommended that the communities in Finland further develop the community lekoteks to include children with handicaps. However, today only a few of the communities have resources to serve children with handicaps. About 300 communities in Finland have lekoteks for the lending of toys. The important component of the lekotek concept that is associated with guidance and educational advice and cooperation with families has not been emphasized in those lekoteks. The reason for this is economic, and is contributed to by a shortage of professionals. However, there is a desire to start lekoteks with those objectives. Today, in addition to the 300 community lekoteks, there are five lekoteks specifically for children with handicaps, and one lekotek which serves both handicappedand non handicapped children.

The following services are offered by the lekoteks for children with handicaps:

* The lekotek offers individual educational advice, including the loan of toys.
* The lekotek offers information, advice and support concerning the development of children and is part of the habilitation of children with handicaps.
* The lekotek cooperates and gives advice to professionals within the daycare organization.
* The lekotek cooperates with designers and manufacturers in the toy industry in order to further develop and construct good toys.

The importance of play for development is emphasized at the lekotek. Toys are seen as the means for play and as aids for play, and yet they are not the most important part of the lekotek service. A lekotek may function without toys, since many of the activities of children incorporate things other than machine made toys. The lekotek service that includes educational advice and supervision is emphasized.

Today, many of the services at the lekoteks are mobile. The lekotek leader comes to the families in their homes. The communities finance the lekotek service for handicapped children, and they are referred to the lekotek by the habilitation center or by a doctor at the hospital.

Today, there are two types of lekoteks in Finland: community based lekoteks which serve the daycare programs, and private lekoteks that specialize in children with handicaps.

3.11 France

In France there are more than 500 toy libraries, or ludotheques, united in a national organization, L'Association des Ludoteques de Francaises (ALF). There are 17 toy library regions, and each toy library region works independently but is linked through the central organization. The Association also arranges inservice training for toy library staff, study visits, exhibitions and has a documentation center. ALF publishes a journal, Trimestriel LUDO, which is distributed to the toy libraries in France and French speaking Belgium.

ALF supports the creation of new toy libraries in France, the cooperation of all people interested in play and games, good relations between the toy libraries in France and other countries, the recognition of the toy library staff as a professional group, education and good documentation of play material and games. In addition, close cooperation with toy manufacturers has been established.

Most toy libraries in France provide services to normally developing children. Children with disabilities most often receive services in special centers. Most toy libraries lend toys to children under the age of ten, but some also lend toys to teenagers and older people. Group activities arranged by the toy library workers are an important part of the service. Parents can also leave their children at the toy libraries for short times, but they are encouraged to join in. From the information brochures that have been submitted it is clear that the cultural value of toys, play and games is much emphasized at the toy libraries in France.

Cooperation between French and British toy libraries has been established recently, initiated by Josette Hospital in the SW Mid-Pyrenees region of toy libraries in France. Josette Hospital reports that the cooperation with Britain will render an exchange of methodology, once funding is arranged.

L'Armoire a Jouet in Paris is one of the most well-known toy libraries for special needs children in France. From the L'Armoire a Jouet the following description of the toy library activities has been submitted both in French and English together with pictures. The English version is quoted below.

"Parents and volunteers are welcome to the ludotheque on one afternoon a week and one Saturday afternoon a month, particularly mentally handicapped children and adults. Our visitors are often unable to speak and their families often feel isolated with their problem. Together they are faced with the dilemma of how to communicate with their child through play.

We have a great number of toys which can be played with on the premises or borrowed for use at home. Parents discover with great surprise that their child, when presented with some new toy, is sometimes capable of achieving things that they never dreamed possible.
Our ludotheque provides a unique setting for meetings between families with a common problem, while in no way discouraging every possible effort to enable handicapped children and adults to take part in the everyday life of the world around them.

Our aim is to help the children and their families find, through play, all that can stimulate their senses and help them to progress.

We are not professionals, but often mothers of problem children ourselves, and we give a warm welcome to other families. In this way, parents discover a marvelous opportunity to share their burdens and happy experiences quite outside of any medical context."

3.12 Ghana

The first toy library in Ghana started in 1976. The founder of this library was Mr John B. Fynn, who answered the request for information. The first toy library was established at Eguafo. The project started with an advertisement on a piece of paper on a tree. The aim of the toy library was to assist in the training and education of children and their parents. Mr Fynn is the director of the toy library and he has nine assistants. There is today only one toy library in the country.

Small children, school children, teenagers and adults are eligible for membership in the toy library. Children with disabilities and their families are not involved. Group activities for children and their parents are arranged at the toy library. Mr Fynn reports that there is a need for toy libraries in different environments such as preschools, schools, social services, hospitals, mobile units and assessment centers. Mr Fynn's toy library is run by both professionals and volunteers.

Other play activities for children within ordinary libraries have also been established in Ghana.

3.13 Great Britain

Material about toy libraries in Great Britain has been provided by Glenys Carter, Director of Play Matters, an organization which receives grants and support from the Department of Health and grants for local work from the Scottish Office and from the Northern Ireland Office.

In Great Britain the first toy library was started by Jill Norris in 1967. Jill had two sons who were handicapped and was a Froebel-trained teacher. Her aim was to provide a variety of toys for children with different disabilities. As a start a number of families began to exchange their own toys, and Jill had the idea of starting a toy library. The members started fundraising to provide toys which were too expensive for individual families to buy. The toy library movement was started by a broadcast on BBC Radio and a feature article in a national newspaper. Soon after Jill's enterprise was given attention in the media, reports of similar activities came pouring in and the toy library mobement developed.

The Toy Libraries Association (TLA) was founded in 1972 by Jill Norris as a registered charity; it had an advisory panel of specialists in child care and play needs. In 1983 the Association joined with ACTIVE, an organisation which aimed to help people with disabilities to lead as full a life as possible. At that time the overall title PLAY MATTERS was adopted.

The main aim of toy libraries are toy loan and parental support. The toy libraries are autonomous units that are members of the national organization (NTLA) with headquarters in part funded by the government. There are about 1100 toy libraries in Great Britain. Since they are autonomous there is great variation among libraries. Taken together the toy libraries serve all kinds of children and some also serve teenagers and adults. Group activities are often part of the programs at the toy libraries. The toy libraries are located at preschools, schools, social service facilities, hospitals, mobile units, assessment centers, churches and other voluntary community centers, health clinics and family centers. Many different professionals work at the toy libraries and also volunteers.

In a brochure published by PLAY MATTERS the following description of toy libraries is given:

Toy libraries exist to promote the principle that play DOES MATTER for the developing child. They operate as a preventive service, filling gaps in the existing services for all families with babies and young children and for people with special needs. By offering a befriending, supportive service to parents and by making available and lending appropriate toys, they extend the opportunity for shared play into the home. They function equally successfully in statutory and voluntary agencies and self-help groups.

WHY TOY LIBRARIES?

Children learn through play. The right play material at the right time is not only enjoyable but also encourages a child's development in the vital early years of life; it can help children who have disabilities to reach their full potential. Good toys, however, are often expensive. Even if they can afford to buy, many parents and careers find it difficult to choose appropriate toys; they may hesitate in case the toys they have choosen are not suitable, for their child's needs. A toy library, from which toys can be borrowed, gives a child a chance to experiment with a wide selection of carefully chosen toys. Favorites may then be bought with confidence, and appropriate toys are available for each successive stage of play. At some toy libraries large toys which may be too big or too expensive for home use are available for play sessions.

HOW DO TOY LIBRARIES WORK?

Toy library sessions are fun! A wide selection of toys is on display for children to play with and from which to choose one or two to take home for a week or more. Many toy libraries offer not only space for children to play together but the opportunity for parents to join in their children's play activities and to meet other families and make friends. Parenting and caring for young children can be hard work. Parents and carers find help and support in meeting each other at a toy library and in drawing on the expertise of toy library workers. Often toy libraries have a helper with specialised knowledge: a health visitor, teacher or physiotherapist, for example. Such informal contacts with childcare professionals can be very valuable. If such professionals do not visit the toy library, the organisers will be able to advise parents where to find help they need.

WHO USES TOY LIBRARIES?

Toy libraries are set up and run by many different organisations, groups and individuals and cater for a variety of needs.

A growing number of community toy libraries open their doors to all children in the area and include in their stock special toys for special children. Borrowers may be childminders, parents with babies and toddlers, one-parent families, grandparents - all are welcome. Some toy libraries lend to groups, usually catering for under-fives, as well as to individuals.

Hospital toy libraries serve children who are short-term in-patients; some hospitals have a toy library in the out-patient department and many toy libraries hold sessions in health clinics. For older children and adults who have mental, physical or multiple handicaps and are living at home or in the community, the concept of leisure libraries is being developed.

In many parts of the country toy libraries encourage families from ethnic minorities to take advantage of their facilities by visiting these families in their homes, helping them to overcome their isolation. Other toy libraries act as resource centers for professionals involved in home visiting. Many toy libraries provide leaflets and posters in languages other than English to advertise their services to a wider community.

WHERE ARE TOY LIBRARIES FOUND?

Toy libraries are as varied as the groups they serve. Many are voluntary and are organised and run by parents. Others are run by voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross, Barnardos Save the Children, the National Childminding Association and MENCAP. Some are set up in nursery and infants' schools, some in special schools and units and some are part of the service offered by children's book libraries. Many toy libraries are going mobile to extend their service to isolated families in both inner cities and remote rural communities. Mobile vans and playbuses also take toys to clinics, hospitals and playgroups attended by children and families as well as to housebound individual families. An outreach service may develop through a home-visiting scheme like "Home-Start".

In the annual report of PLAY MATTERS 1987/88 Peter Moss from the Coram Research Unit gives his view of toy libraries as a positive pointer forwards in child-care policy. He states "there is a depp seated tendency in British society to view children, and childcare, as private issues, the business of parents only and that society should only intervene where parents are unable to fulfil their proper role. An alternative view is that our children are society's main assert, and that parenthood is a valuable sicial function, which should be adequately supported and resourced. Toy libraries are a very positive pointer to taking this discussion forward. The services they offer to the family as a whole extend play into the home circle and, based as they are on a befriending non-judgemental approach, they help parents to prepare their children for the social experience".

PLAY MATTERS has four advisory panels, consisting of voluntary representatives from a range of agencies with professionals representing different areas. The advisory panel for training is involved in courses on how to start a toy library and other aspects of toy library work, and in providing training for other organisaitons on the topic of play and toys. The publications group aims to oversee the publication of a range of booklets on various aspects of play, particularly for children with special needs. The advisory panel for toy appraisal work in connection with "What Toy" magazine, and appraise and assess new toys and play materials. The "Special Needs" panel reflects the concern of the organisation for the provision of appropriate play and leisure and equipment for children and older people with special needs.

To sum up, the toy library movement in Great Britain is a strong force in promoting the importance of play and leisure for children and young people with disabilities. The principle that play does matter for the developing child is the main focus of work for PLAY MATTERS.

3.14 Hong Kong

From Hong Kong we have received a letter from Mrs Annie Au and Mr Simon Lueung, Kowloon. They report that the first toy library in Hong Kong was established in November 1982. It was financed by the Rotary Club, but is today run by the government. In Hong Kong there are ten toy libraries with various programs serving children of different ages and abilities. There are also eight toy libraries at medical and health departments. Most of them serve children in preschool and primary school. Older children are welcome at some toy libraries. The toy libraries also offer group activities both for children, parents and for mixed groups.

The main aim of the toy libraries are:

1. To foster understanding of the need for play in children
2. To help in the selection of good toys and play material
3. To function as a resource center

Toy libraries in Hong Kong are located at various places, including preschools, schools, social services, hospitals, mobile libraries or assessment centers. The staff involved in the toy libraries are both professionals and volunteers. The professionals are physiotherapists, teachers, social workers, occupational therapists or psychologists.

Most of the toy libraries in Hong Kong are not equipped specifically to provide services for children with handicaps. Rather, all children attending the center are offered services, and often parent training and parent groups are arranged. Most of the centers offer specific individual therapeutic programs, often combined with toy loan service. Some centers have free play supervised by workers, and no toy loan service.

Eight toy libraries within medical and health departments have toy loan services in conjunction with specific therapeutic home programs.

In the table below, which we have received from Mrs Annie Au, the locations of the toy libraries, criteria for service and programmes offered are showed. This gives a good view of the toy libraries in Hong Kong.

3.15 Hungary

In Hungary there are no toy libraries as such. However, there are other programs for children that have points in common with toy libraries. Mrs Sugar Kadar at the Institute for Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest has sent information on those programs.

In 1981 the Szorakatenusz Museum of Toys was started by dr J. Kriston Vizi. The Museum of Toys was founded in the ancient Hungarian town of Kecskemt. The name Szorakatnusz is a meaningless word taken from a well known children's rhyme. This museum has two basic aims: collecting and exhibiting country and urban Hungarian toys of different eras, and popularizing modern children's culture and renewing it with traditional crafts and creative use of basic materials.

The Hungarian Society of Toys and Play was organized in 1987 by T. Szentivanyi. This society is called Kiss Aron. Aron was a pedagogue of the last century, and began to collect and systematize the toys and traditions of the Hungarian folklore. The Kiss Aron Society was founded with support of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Industry and the National Office of Youth and Sport. The headquarters of Kiss Aron is the Hungarian Society of Toys in Kecskemt. The aim of this society is to discover, save and enrich Hungarian toy and play culture. In order to fulfil these aims the members work in the following sections: toy history, toys and play in education, up-to-date toys, development and production of toys.

Various exhibitions are held to illustrate the aims of the society. One such exhibition shows Hungarian country and urban toys of the last century and the early part of this century. The main idea of this exhibition is to show the kind of toys and manners of play in connection with life styles in the countryside and the towns, and the ancient tradition of different folk and religious festivals. Another part of the exhibition is a collection of wooden toys from Finland, which has been shown within the auspices of the Hungarian-Finnish Cultural Agreement of the Ministries of Education. This exhibition was preceded last year by a traveling exhibition of Hungarian toys in Finland. This international cultural exchange program has been realized by the professional organization of dr J. Kriston Vizi (Hungary) and dr M Kalliopuska (University of Helsinki, Finland).The parallel exhibitions of old Hungarian toys on one side, and the ancient and up-to-date wooden toys from Finland on the other side, prove to the visitors (children, their parents and professionals) that the function, themes and tools of play are international.

All children, teenagers and adults are welcome to visit the establishments. There are group activities for children alone and for parents and children. Staff are both professionals and volunteers. At these centers you can find educators, psychologists, museologists of history, culture and ethnography, and artists of applied arts.

Mrs Kadar concludes that international cooperation in both theoretical and methodological work in connection with toy collections is useful as an aspect of the national, as well as the universal cultural history. It is also very useful as an aspect of pedagogical efforts to find educational methods based on play. Play is viewed as the foundation of psychologically well balanced development in children.

3.16 Iceland

A personal visit in 1988 at the lekotek in Reykjavik in combination with written information is the basis for the description of lekotek in Iceland. Two lekotek leaders from the central lekotek, Petrina Thorsteinsdottir and Asta Sigurbjörnsdottir, kindly welcomed a study visit and gave information about lekoteks in Iceland.

In Iceland, lekotek is part of the State diagnostic and counseling center for children with developmental disabilities. This center is beautifully situated in a suburban area close to the sea north of Reykjavik. One of the houses was originally built as a home for a famous Icelandic painter, and contributes to the impression of the center as very beautifully and carefully designed.

In March 1983 Iceland passed a law concerning services for disabled people, including physically and mentally handicapped people. According to this law the country is divided into 8 districts that offer services to the handicapped. Of the services mandated, lekotek service is the second. Iceland is the only country to word such services so strongly in law.

Local circumstances and needs are decisive in the development of a toy library. This is very clear in Iceland. Today Iceland is inhabited by 240,000 people, 60% of whom live in Reykjavik. Large parts of Iceland are very sparsely inhabited. Assessment, diagnosis and treatment of children with a disability is handled by the diagnostic and counseling center in Reykjavik. For every child with a suspicion of delay or disability, a medical, psychological and educational diagnosis is made at the center. Recommendations about treatment are then forwarded to the local district and carried through in close connection with the parents.

The first lekotek in Iceland was established in 1976, and all eight lekoteks are based on a Swedish or Norwegian model. The State diagnostic and counseling center in Reykjavik is organized on a transdisciplinary model. Assessment and treatment is provided by a team where the toy librarian has a vital part. She is often the one who sees the family first. Contact with the physician, for example, is often established in a playroom at the lekotek. Recently, two new lekoteks have opened in Iceland, one for home day care providers and one at a home for mentally retarded. There is also a lekotek at a school for the deaf.
The toys used at the lekoteks in Iceland are very much the same as those that are seen in lekoteks in other countries. It is part of the philosophy of lekotek that the toys are simply a means to reach a goal, thus the toys themselves are not so interesting. Rather, it is the play activity that is of most importance. The lekotek leaders also emphasized that people are the best toys and lekotek tries to teach that to the parents.

Most of the children who attend lekotek are under three years of age, and therefore communication and language training are central parts of the lekotek contact. The youngest children (2 months to 2-3 years) come to the lekotek with their parents for guidance and training every week. Older children have longer intervals between their visits. Every day 6-8 children visit the lekotek for one to one and a half hours.

The lekotek leaders expressed a wish for more toys adapted for children with severe handicaps. Some specially designed toys could be found at the center, such as toys for the training of eye-hand coordination, designed and made by a grandfather. An electronic toy with sound and light for children with severe physical handicaps had been designed and made by a father. The lekotek leaders expressed that they want to give priority to the purchase of toys for severely handicapped children.

Beyond working with assessment and play therapy at the center the lekotek leaders work with inservice education for the lekotek personnel at the other lekoteks, and for professionals at institutions for children with disabilities. One of their tasks is to give guidance to local toy stores when they order new toys. The cooperation with the stores has proven to be very beneficial to both parties.

The original lekotek concept has developed into its full potential in Iceland. Since Iceland is a small country with a limited number of possibilities for education, the professionals at the center have been educated at universities in different countries. This seems to be an asset for lekotek, since the professionals bring with them different frames of reference and experiences that ultimately are tied together and adapted into a uniquely Icelandic way of providing services for families with children with disabilities.

3.17 India

In India the first toy library was founded in 1982 by Mr B.K. Deepak, who has answered the request for information. The main goal of the toy libraries in India is to develop an awareness of the importance of play for exploring, learning and developing activities. Play is seen as an extraordinary means of awakening and stimulation and as an introduction to social relations for the child.

The framework for the organization of the toy library is "Khel - Kheloney" which means play and toys - a toy library and workshop. At present there are about ten toy libraries in India and they are available to all children, teenagers and adults with or without disabilities. There are many group activities in the toy libraries. Children can attend a group, can come and play with toys, or can create toys. Parents have groups at the toy library in order to learn how to play with their children and how to create toys. In addition to this, parents and children can attend groups in order to play and create toys together. Mr Deepak also holds workshops in other countries, constructing simple low cost toys similar to the ones made in India., being a "Toymaker Ambassador"

The location of the toy libraries is often close to schools or social services. The toy library idea is rather new in India and it is growing slowly. An example of the growth is a playbus in New Delhi developed by the Nehru Bal Samiti. The toy libraries in India are run on a voluntary basis.

Mr Deepak explains his philosophy of play and the importance of toys in the following way: "The importance of various toys in the developmental process of a child cannot be overstressed. Right from the very first few months he begins to notice and play with objects within his reach. The child is spontaneous, and a toy takes him to the peak of expression. Furthermore, the Toy Library (where so many children meet) is not only a place where a child can enjoy toys and games but also serves the purpose of developing the child's social sense so that he can grow up into a well integrated individual. As the child is allowed to take the toy home, it makes the toy accessible to other children as well, thus helping communication. The possibilities of transforming the exchange and making of toys into a bond of goodwill and friendship among the children is greatly needed by society. Our aim, therefore, is to set up a chain of Toy Libraries in Delhi and over time to extend this project throughout the country."

3.18 Israel

Margalith Akavya, director of The Educational Center for Games in Israel has answered our short inquiry. The organisation she describes has grown from experiments with lending games to be taken home, which culminated into research and eventually that Kindergartens and schools in the lower grades have fixed hours in a weekly schedule assigned to table-games, sports, movement and other recreation activities.

In the proceedings of the fourth international conference of toy libraries Chaya Kroopnick describes the Israeli toy libraries, the S. E. M. E L., the word meaning both toy lending library and sign or symbol for see. This toy lending library began at the Jerusalem Child Development Centre, and provides children below the age of five with toys. In 1987 more than 200 children were using the toy library that could offer more than 600 tgames and pieces of therapeutic equipment. The S.E.M.E.L. has an emphasis on parental and sibling involvement, pointing out that the parent is invaluable as the child's first "toy".

3.19 Italy

The description of the toy libraries in Italy is based on a personal visit in 1988 and written information. Mr. Giorgio Bartolucci, promoter of the first toy library in Italy and director of the International Toy Libraries Documentation Centre in Florence, and professionals at the toy library in Florence have given information.

The philosophy behind the development of toy libraries (ludoteca) in Italy is based on a theory about the culture of play, and on the idea that autonomous play is crucial for a child's healthy development. In the so called Ischia report from 1985 this idea is elaborated:

" Society is experiencing a crisis concerning human relationships and values, violence is becoming a way of living, the impossibility of reaching objectives leads men to make personal decisions which for them are destructive. All this leads to a need for urgent change to influence both interpersonal relationships and the environment."

"People in charge of running toy libraries are aware of the irreplaceable function of play in the relation to the growth of human personality: and they see play as a basic way to initiate change even if they acknowledge objective difficulties. Society should consider and accept a reevaluation of play, as socity itself has caused a dichotomy between play and work, fiction and reality, gratiousness and possessions."

The toy library concept in Italy thus emphasizes cultural traditions of play as opposed to an "international" way of playing using commersialized toys.

The targetgroup for the toy libraries in Italy is everybody from the ages 0 to 99, but most of the persons who attend the toy libraries are school children and teenagers. At the toy library they can try and lend toys and games, and the toy library also is a meeting place and a place for festivals and artistic activities.

More than 50 toy libraries thrive in Italy today. The first was established in 1977 by the recreation club of the National Electric Energy Board in Florence. The initiative came from the unions that work with creative activity and play of the employees children and is interested in new educational ideas. The Faculty of Pedagogics at Bologna University was also involved in the creation of the first toy library. The aim of the toy libraries is to foster a new play culture, where the toys are encouraging children to autonomous play, creativity and social relationships. Social relationship are emphasized at the toy libraries. Communication between children and between children and adults is seen as extremely important in the psychological growth of the child and also the development of new values and new solutions to the problems in society. The toy libraries are a place for children to meet, to socialize and get to know each other. It is important, also, for parents to join in with their children and other children in play and creative activities.

The toy libraries in Italy are mostly financed by the communities or in a joint venture by the community and different trade unions, but also by cooperations and private organizations. Most toy libraries are in the northern part of Italy.

As an example of an Italian toy library, the toy library in Florence is described shortly. Ludoteca Centrale de Florence is beautifully situated in an old building formerly used as a home for abandoned children at Piazza della Annunziata in central Florence. The toy library presents itself as a cultural, educational and social center for the community and the region. It is open six days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and offers space, materials, services and activities to individuals and groups of all ages. It serves the people of Florence and the region of Tuscany. The city of Florence has more than 400 000 inhabitants. The toy library has about 4000 members. At the toy library people borrow toys, but the toy library also is a book lending library and an audiovisual center. Cultural programs are an important part of the activities at the toy library.

A great number of of activities are offered to the members of the toy library such as workshops or laboratories that include music, singing and dancing games, model construction, dramatics, film and video-making, animation, sound-tape and slide production, origami, puppetmaking, photography, making toys and games of all kinds and arranging festivals.

The ludoteca offers a whole range of short-courses for professionals. The objective for these cources is to train toylibrarians, school teachers, preschool teachers and other professionals in arranging provisions for play, and to use facilities such as film, video and drama to enhance play among children and teenagers.

At the ludoteca in Florence 18 people are employed. Most of them are former teachers that have started to work as toylibrarians, since there today is unemployment in the Italian elementary schools due to a low birth rate. The toy librararians are responsible for arranging activities at the ludoteca and establishing cooperation with other institutions in the region. Lately they have established cooperation with a prison, and set up a small toy library run by two prisoners. Two of the toy librarians regularly visit the prison and teach games and outdoorplay to the prisoners. Another activity is cooperation with a hospital engaging the personnel in working with play and games.

The ludoteca is open every morning for small children and their caretakers. The children can play with the toys, and the mothers or caretakers talk to each other. For them the ludoteca serves as a meeting place. After their sixth birthday, children can come to the ludoteca by themselves. The toylibrarians do not regularly play with the children or teach mothers about play. Rather, their main responsibility is to arrange space for play and offer toys and games to play with.

In the afternoon free play is possible for all children in the playroom. The workshops are also run in the afternoons. Most of the workshops are conducted by the toy librarians, but other professionals may also be responsible. Some of the toy librarians have specialized in various areas, for example, photography and video, others in puppetmaking. A new program of making new toys involves the school of art, technical institute and the school of music. Here highschool teenagers 15-16 years old will be involved. The objective is that they shall plan the activity in school and produce the toy at the ludoteca. Afterwords an exhibition will be held at the ludoteca. One of the activities regularly offered at the ludoteca is the arrangement of festivals. In arranging these festivals the participants themselves makes costumes and masks at the ludoteca, and the festival is held at the piazza or in the open space outside the ludoteca.

The toylibrarians in Florence emphasize the importance of the setting for play-activities. The setting for the ludoteca in Florence is ideal from this point of view. The building has an old tradition and on one wall in the library room an old painting illustrates how the house was used as a home for abandoned children. The tradition of using the house for the benefit of children is still kept but in another form.

Future plans for the ludoteca include a network in Florence with toy libraries with the central toy library coordinating staff and training. Finally, after ten years of operation the toy library has found its place in the cultural and social environment of Florence, and that it now has become an interesting speaker in the debate to program a culture for children and the young.

In the ludoteca in Florence handicapped children are welcome as well as other children, but there are no special programmes for them. Many toy libraries in Italy have services for handicapped children. In Turin, for example severely handicapped children have programs for stimulating play activity. However, the emphasis is on the impact of play and creativity for all children.

The 5th International Conference of Toy Libraries "Play is for all" was held in Turin in the autumn of 1990.

3.20 Jamaica

Our request about toy libraries in Jamaica was responded to by Mrs. Joyce Brown, who is the director of the Early Stimulation Project (ESP), a program of the Jamaica Council for the handicapped under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Security. There are no toy libraries in Jamaica, but agencies involved with young children, disabled or normal, have a supply of educational toys which teachers and counselors use.

From a brochure about ESP the following information is received. ESP is patterned after the Portage Project developed in Wisconsin, USA, and is a home-based delivery system which involves parent intervention in the education of handicapped preschool children. The parent is seen as the best teacher for the child. Each child is placed on an intervention program administered by a Child Development Aide. The intervention program is designed to provide each child with an individualized plan for education, suited to the child's particular learning style and needs. Toys are the main tools used to achieve goals. They are sent home to parents on loan, whenever there is a need related to the program or activities given to the child. The Child Development Aide visits the home weekly and demonstrates for the mother how to teach the child different skills. Since the majority of the parents find the cost of good educational toys very prohibitive, the center has for some years been making toys from junk material.

Mrs Brown maintains that the concept of toy libraries is a very good and vital one, but that because of very limited resources they are not in a position to establish toy libraries in Jamaica today. She further hopes that as soon as the opportunity presents itself the idea will be put into effect.

In our short enquiry Mrs Brown has deleted the word toy libraries and has changed it to resource centers. She reports that agencies working with normal and disabled children from 0 to 6 years have resource materials for the purpose of carrying out certain activities related to the child's development. The resource centers are located at preschools, hospitals, assessment centers and nurseries. Both professionals and volunteers work at the centers. The professionals are teachers, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists.

Although there are no toy libraries as such, some photos have been sent to us from a "very, very limited" toy library in Clarendon by Celine Rothenhoefer, Acting Parent Association Coordinator, in the Clarendon Group for the Disabled. She has sent photos of children playing in the toy library.

3.21 Japan

Information about toy libraries in Japan has been submitted by Matao Nagase, M. D. and pediatric psychiatrist in Tokyo and chairman of the Japan Association of Toy Libraries (JATL) and by Mrs Rutsu Kobayashi, director of the Japanese Council of Toy Libraries.

The first toy library in Japan was founded by Mr. Tadashi Tsujii in Osaka in 1969. Mr. Tsujii had worked at Bethel "The Town of the Handicapped" in West Germany, and when he came back to Japan he realized that play was the main force behind the development of the child. With the Swedish model for toy libraries as one of the inspiring forces he opened the first toy library in Japan. Today there are more than 360 toy libraries in Japan. The toy libraries were first open to special needs children, but today some local communities also welcome non-handicapped children. The table below shows the growth in the number of toy libraries since 1982.

Table 2. Annual changes in the number of toy libraries in Japan

Fiscal year	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Toy libraries	11	38	81	125	183	253	322	368

In December 1982 psychologists, teachers, therapists, toy-makers and a medical doctor had the first conference on toy libraries for special needs children. At this conference the Japan

Association of Toy Libraries (JATL) was formed. JATL has a seminar each year with special lectures about play, toys and how to start up new toy libraries.

The toy libraries in Japan are supported by private funds. However, donations are not exempted from taxation, and therefore it is difficult to raise money. The Japanese Toy Library Foundation is a non-profit organization. The foundation works mainly for the welfare of disabled children and supports the activities of the toy libraries. It was established to help toy libraries to collect domestic and international information about children with special needs and also to conduct research on the well being of children with special needs. Mrs Kobayashi submitted a pamphlet "Toy Libraries in Japan", which describes the Japanese toy libraries and their foundation. To give an accurate picture of Japanese toy libraries parts of the pamphlet are cited below:

The Foundation is engaged in the following enterprises:

* Providing financial aid to toy libraries. 70 new libraries will receive aid every year.
* Researching and collecting material on activities in Japanese and foreign toy libraries.
* Conducting research and studies by dispatching investigators to toy libraries.
* Conducting co-studies and collecting information by inviting representatives from foreign Toy Library Associations to Japan.
* Conducting research on toys.
* Conducting a census of toy libraries in Japan.
* Compiling and distributing instructional handbooks on how to make home made toys, as well as conducting trials and studies of these toys.
* Compiling PR booklets to promote the expansion of toy libraries and their nationwide distribution.
* Conducting PR activities to promote the expansion of toy libraries.

Toy libraries in Japan provide a program to promote the welfare of handicapped children via toys and playing. Toys which are safe for children with disabilities are selected from ones on the market in addition to home-made toys. Collections of such toys are made available to the children and their mothers as well as volunteers who are helping out. Toy lending services are also provided. The purpose of the movement is to help handicapped children open their hearts through play and thus promote their development and therapeutic improvement.

At the center of this movement are volunteers. Volunteers carry out the actual operation of the toy libraries and playhouses for handicapped children. Each library is managed in such a way that fits best with the locality and conditions in which it is placed, but everyone involved in toy libraries has a common understanding that a toy library is a part of the treatment of young handicapped children. They share the following fundamental ideas about toy libraries:

* A toy library is a place where a wide variety of toys are made available, and to which any child with a handicap is welcome.
* A toy library provides toy lending services free of charge.
* A toy library's services should not be done for profit-making purposes.

Toy library activities are based in each local community, and while the primary purpose is to serve handicapped children, some local communities have expanded toy library services to include children who are not handicapped. In such cases, the toy libraries are playing a role to promote the sound development of all children in the communities.

The toy libraries in Japan can be categorized into three types by their users:

1. Libraries for handicapped children only
2. Libraries for handicapped children and their siblings
3. Libraries for all children

In the proceedings of the 4 th International Conference of Toy Libraries (1987) Ruth Kobayashi mentions that category 3 (lending to all children) comprises up to 40% of all loans. She also emphasizes that more and more toy libraries are trying to open their doors to all children. However, this sometimes presents difficulties for the handicapped children, because they then have less room and fewer possibilities for play.

Activities of the toy libraries are not regulated by any local government agencies, but rather are run by private volunteer workers. Many of the libraries are located in public buildings such as social welfare halls, civic centers and community centers. They are open on certain days of the month and children come with their parents. Usually, they are open for 2 to 4 days a month. A few are open every day.

Some libraries welcome not only handicapped children who are being taken care of at home but also those who are institutionalized in special schools in the same community. Some of them provide children in hospitals and institutions with mobile toy library services.

Toy libraries are not just places for handicapped children to play, but can also be a place for person-to-person exchanges or even for rest. While they are open, anyone can come anytime to play. Some may wish to just rest there. Mothers may use the toy library to meet and talk with each other.

Fund raising presents one of the most difficult challenges Japanese toy libraries face today. The libraries try their best to be self-sufficient by collecting contributions, holding bazaars and other functions.

This voluntary toy library movement is still quite young. It was initiated in the International Year of the Disabled. The more the movement is expanded throughout the country, and the deeper it gets rooted in each community, the greater the role each library is expected to play in society.

3.22 Jordan

From Mrs Roubaya Anabtawi we have received a letter with information from the first and only toy library in the country. She tells us the following:

"Our toy library is the first and the only one in Jordan. According to a definition approved by the Swedish Toy Library Association our lekotek is defined as follows:

The lekotek provides educational counseling and support to families with preschool children who have physical, psychological or social handicaps. It promotes knowledge, gives advice and support with regards to the childs development, and is also a link in the habilitation of handicapped children.
The lekotek provides individual counseling and remedial programs which sometimes includes the loan of toys. The lekotek staff co-operates with others working in the field of child rehabilitation and acts in a consultative capacity in relation to other child care

authorities. Another function for the lekotek is to keep informed about the educational and qualitative development of play materials.

In a Jordanian context, the scope is even wider. Thus, a lekotek can serve as a focal point for programs of early childhood stimulation within the framework of primary health care activities. There is also a group of young children who deserve special attention. A lekotek can contribute in developing methods for special support to those children and their families.

A program includes individual and functional training. The children come to the lekotek accompanied by at least one of their parents. An important feature in the work is that the teacher also makes home visits to the families. The various training elements are intended to strengthen the perception of self, communication ability, the creation of ideas and to stimulate the development of motor ability, perception, social, cognitive and linguistic abilities.

The lekotek is integrated into an Institute of Child Health and Development. The professional leader of this center, a child health pediatrician, supervises the lekotek activities. He also, together with a child health psychologist and a psychiatric social worker, (both Swedish and working with The Save the Children organization in Amman), is at the disposal of the lekotek as professional consultants.

The lekotek serves as a model for future lekotek activities of different kinds throughout the country. Thus it is essential not to focus on one single category of children but to test the lekotek idea on a number of various categories, such as emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, and physically handicapped. The exact composition of the groups has to be defined at a later stage.
The activities will be well documented and continually evaluated. The lekotek is also carrying out training and teaching activities.

3.23 Korea

Dr. Freda Kim has sent a careful description of the toy libraries in Korea. In September 1982 the planning and toy making for Korea's first toy library started. 360 toys were made from salvaged materials, and these items were cataloged into the developmental categories still being used to manage the library in Lekotek Korea: cognitive, co-ordination, tactile, pre-number, pre-language and family corner.

In March 1983 the first toy library opened as part of a preschool program for disabled children and their parents. This program includes sessions for parents in toy making and using toys to help their children, as well as seminars on special education and family health and recreation. The toy library was also open to families with a disabled child not attending the preschool program, and in August 1985 the toy library was opened to non-disabled children.

Since December 1987 Lekotek Korea has been registered with the Anglican Church Foundation. There is no law covering this kind of work in Korea so there is no license from the government, but Lekotek Korea does have permission to operate.

Lekotek Korea receives no monetary support from the church or the government. Despite many discussions about sponsorship, Lekotek Korea has not yet succeeded in finding a sponsor. Funding comes from fees from the users, a monthly jumble sale, a yearly dinner and irregular donations. The new playrooms, Anglican Lekotek, were bought with a donation from the Sunday School children of the Episcopal Church in America with money raised in 1985. These premises are the property of the Anglican Foundation in Korea.

Lekotek Korea is a support system for families with disabled preschool children. The program centers around the toy library and looks at the disabled person in the context of his/her family at all times. In addition to helping disabled children, any child from birth to the second year in primary school can use the library to borrow toys.

Lekotek Korea offers a wide variety of service options to families, ranging from an intervention program that meets five half days per week, to toy loan only, and includes individual and group services. In addition, counseling and family therapy is available as well as a range of parent education lectures.

The Lekotek has one toy library, two small spaces for individual play therapy in rented premises, and group playrooms in the Anglican Lekotek (owned premises). The Staff consists of one director and six teachers with bachelors degrees in special education, early childhood education or psychology, or social welfare as a minimum qualification. Of the present staff one has a Masters degree in Special Education and two more attend graduate school (evening classes).

The number of Lekotek users average about 50 families of special children a week, and about 50 families of non-handicapped children each month. Field work students also attend the Lekotek an average of 10 days a year. The number of toys at the Lekotek is about 1,500.

The Lekotek has yearly events consisting of lekotek leader training, a Toy Festival and dinner shows. The Lekotek leader training course covers major disabilities in children, child psychology, family counseling and how to make and use toys to help children. A Lekotek leader from Lekotek Korea received lekotek leader training from the National Lekotek Center in the USA, and in turn is now training professionals in Korea. The first lekotek leader training course in Korea was held in January 1989, and was attended by 39 students, teachers and parents who completed 30 hours of lectures. Eleven of the original trainees have also completed 30 hours of practicum in Lekotek in order to qualify as certified lekotek leaders.

A Toy Festival is held each year to commemorate the anniversary of the Lekotek's move to the center of Seoul. It gives Lekotek a chance to advertise their work and an opportunity to display toys that have been made in the Lekotek throughout the year by parents, teachers and field work students. Toys from 15 other countries were displayed in 1990, and toy manufacturers were invited to display their goods. There is a great need in Korea to explore ideas that are specific to children with special needs and to encourage toy manufacturers to produce durable, safe toys.

The dinner show is the main fund raising source for Lekotek Korea. It is held in a hotel ballroom with professional entertainers. Between 500 and 600 guests generate an income of $10,000 US.

The Lekotek also has monthly events, such as:

1. The national toy libraries association meets in Lekotek Korea once a month. This is a group of qualified leaders who meet for a seminar and to discuss their own programs, as well as national and international toy topics.
2. A jumble sale of second hand clothes is held by a group of volunteer ladies once a month in the road outside the Lekotek. The money made at these sales is given to Lekotek. This brings in between $ 100 and $ 200 each month.

3.The Newsletter is published bi-monthly in Korean and once or twice a year in *English and Korean. An effort is made to give international and Korean news.* Teachers and parents are asked to contribute articles regularly as well as ideas for making and using toys.

The Newsletter is circulated to universities, special schools and preschool education centers, and is also given to all those who visit the lekotek. 10,000 copies are printed each time. The o7 3 interest in the Lekotek teaching program is increasing, and in 1987 a TV program about the Lekotek was made.

In the future, Lekotek Korea hopes to establish a Lekotek National Center to include toy library, play therapy, group play, family counseling, parent education, leader training and lekotek promotion activities. All these are actually taking place today, but the current space is fragmented and there is a need to be under one roof. The National Center is planned and urgently needed but a lack of funding makes those plans impossible to carry out as yet.

Three new lekoteks are also planned by people who have received lekotek leader training: one in the Noranjin area of Seoul, one in Taegu, four hours by road south of Seoul and the other in Chunchon, two hours north of Seoul by road. These will all be different. The one in Noranjin, Seoul is for disadvantaged children who have poor homes and play in the streets. In Taegu the Lekotek will be part of a playroom for disabled children and in the same building as a hospital. In the small town of Chunchon the Lekotek will be held in church premises and will be established by a neighborhood committee.

Lekotek Korea has published one book and a second one is being prepared. The title is "Our toys". It is a survey of toys that are used regularly in the Lekotek. Some of these are made at the Lekotek and others are good old favorites that are available on the open market.

3.24 New Zealand

From New Zealand a list of toy libraries has been submitted by Pam Taylor and by Betty Willis, who represent the Toy Library Federation of New Zealand. Today there are about 60 toy libraries in New Zealand. Most are community based and cater for children without handicaps. There are also toy libraries for children with special needs, toy libraries at hospitals and at regular libraries.

In a paper presented at the 4th International Conference for Toy Libraries, Beverly Morris, senior lecturer at the Centre for Continuing Education, Victoria University of Wellington, emphasized that the aims of the toy libraries are diverse. The most important are to provide good quality toys as a service for parents, and to provide challenging toys for children with disabilities. The focus of the toy libraries on New Zealand is on the parent as a teacher for the child. The parents are seen as the child's first and most important teacher, and the toy libraries work to give parents an insight into the educational value of play.

Thus, the toy libraries have an important role in training parents. The content of what will be learned depends on what the parents already know, but knowledge in child development has no end as exciting research expands horizons. What do parents want to know? Usually they want assurance that their children are growing and making progress and, if not, where to go to get advice. Most are ready to accept information about the toy equipment and what their children can do with it. A common request is what to do about behaviour that concerns the parents - a wide area of parenting skills coming under the title of discipline.

How to best share the value of play with parents? The majority of learners learn best through their eyes, some through their ears and others by a combination of all channels taking part in an activity connected with the content to be studied. The old Chinese adage sums it up:

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand

3.25 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland toy libraries are organized and run by three different organizations: the North-Eastern Education and Library Board, the Belfast Education and Library Board, and Family Centers run by Save the Children Fund of Northern Ireland. In total, there are about 70 toy libraries in Northern Ireland.

Information about toy libraries organized by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board in Northern Ireland was sent by Mrs. Jean Clarke, principal of Townpark school. Today there are about 31 toy libraries of this kind in Northern Ireland, and 15 of those are affiliated with the British Toy Library Association (Play Matters). The toy libraries have different target groups and their locations vary. Some are for children without disabilities, quite a large number are for special needs children, and some are for mentally handicapped children and blind children. The toy libraries are located in schools, child care departments,child development clinics, speech therapy departments and pediatric support units at hospitals and at special schools. Some of the toy libraries lend both books and toys. The opening times of the toy libraries vary. The toy libraries at hospitals and special schools are often open every day. Others are open once a week, and others when needed. No information was received about the ratio of professionals and volunteers that work at the toy libraries.

Mrs. D M Pinkerton, preschool and primary adviser, has sent information about toy and book libraries organized by Belfast Education and Library Board. In Belfast there are 25 toy and book libraries in Nursery and Primary schools and 4 in Special Schools.

Save the Children Fund in Northern Ireland provides toy libraries for children attending their different facilities for children, families and young people. Save the Children Fund operates 7 family centers, 3 playgroups, 3 playcenters, a community playbus and a creche. One center for prisoner's families also provides day care for the children of prisoners while the families visit the prison or the court. A youth farm offers a creative environment for children from 3 to 18, including handicapped children. The family centers are community based and provide play experiences for children from 3 to 11, youth clubs, mothers and toddlers groups and also include toy libraries.

3.26 Norway

In 1969 the first lekotek in Norway was started by the organization "MENTAL BARNEHJELP" (Help for children with mental impairment), with supervision from the Social Department. Unni Böhmer, who is the pioneer of lekotek in Norway, was appointed principal of this first lekotek. Today, 20 years after its start, she is still active as head of the lekotek in Baerum.

In Norway, the lekoteks are part of the services offered to children with special needs. Schools receive services from about 250 government-sponsored guidance clinics called Psycho- Educational-Services (PES). These clinics are run by a team of psychologists, consultants, social workers, special education teachers, and other professionals in the area of assessment and training of children with disabilities of different kinds. In 1976 the PES was increased to include preschool children. When possible, a lekotek is an integrated part of this organization, with the goal of giving educational support and stimulation to children with special needs. In most cases, preschool teachers with 1-2 years' further special education training work at the lekotek. The lekotek leader is always a member of the psychological and educational preschool team, even if the lekotek belongs to the local school district. Some lekoteks are situated at special schools, hospitals or other organizations for assessment and training of children and youth with special needs.

The lekoteks in Norway vary in quality and size as well as administration. Most are administered by PES, but some are administered by the Ministry of Educational Affairs, Ministry of Education, centers for educational psychology or by a school. They can also be linked with a medical institution. Today there are about 200 lekoteks in Norway. Children and youth with handicaps and their families are welcome at the lekoteks. Some teenagers and adults are clients at the lekoteks, although this is rare. Thus, the age range of Norwegian lekoteks is from children of a few months of age up to adults.

The aim of the Norwegian lekoteks is to help the family to give the handicapped child stimulation to attain optimal development and as good a life as possible in spite of the child's functional disorder. Most of the clients are preschool children. Considering the importance of early stimulation, this is essential.

Many of the children visiting the lekotek are understimulated as a result of the parents' poor ability to provide the child with stimulation. The parents themselves might have been understimulated as children, or have poor knowledge of the needs of children, or they may have unfulfilled personal needs. When the parents are unable to fulfil the needs of the children, emotional disturbances and concrete language difficulties often prevail. Poor vocabulary, as well as poor receptive and expressive language is a common complication in understimulated children. The proportion of understimulated children at the lekoteks in Norway is increasing today. Unni Böhmer believes that this is because the professionals who refer children to the lekoteks have experienced what a stimulating effect play has on those children, and are making more referrals.

Lekotek has earned a great deal of attention in Norway. The effects of the guidance and advice given by the lekotek leader and the educational play materials are well known today, and more and more children and parents are using lekotek. In the beginning, only parents of children with handicaps came to the lekotek, but today new groups are attending, such as immigrant children and adopted children from developing countries. The ways of approaching these new groups differ a great deal, and must be adapted to the childrens' as well as the parents' needs and qualifications.

The lekoteks in Norway also welcome children with injuries and chronic illness. This includes children with broken legs, those recovering from accidents as well as children with asthma and allergies. Periodically, these children must be isolated from other children and cannot play with them. Then, new and interesting play material from the lekotek is essential.

Professionals and institutions such as schools, health service centers, and preschools with integrated handicapped children can borrow play materials from the lekoteks. In addition to play material, advice on how to use it and information on what functions it trains is offered.

The lekotek leader often makes educational visits and gives lectures to teachers. The lekotek leader also cooperates closely with other professionals who work with children. Furthermore, toy manufacturers visit the lekoteks to obtain advice on how to develop play material for children with different handicaps. The lekotek leaders in Norway are responsible for administration, purchasing, labeling of the play materials and also have responsibility for the lekotek budget.

3.27 Philippines

From professor Charlotte Floro, University of the Philippines, Manila, we have received a letter informing us that there are no toy libraries as such and no organized programs featuring the toy library idea in the Philippines. However, during the last years they have trained staff and developed programs for disabled and non-disabled children in other forms. The services available are directed to all kinds of children, school children and teenagers. They have also established group activities for parents and children. Toys are available in preschools, schools, hospitals and assessment centers, but they are not placed in a specific toy library structure. At present, professionals also use toys in therapy with children.

Professor Floro emphasizes that the idea of toy libraries is certainly interesting for the Philippines, and that if in the future they establish a toy library they would like to have special teachers, occupational therapists, regular school teachers, psychologists and recreational therapists working there.

3.28 Poland

From Poland we have received two letters from two different Rehabilitation Centres for Children. The letters are written by Marie Borkowska and Maria Nalezyty. They report that there are no formal toy library organizations or toy libraries in Poland today. However, they are aware that the idea of toy libraries is very important, especially for children with disabilities, and they described several programs with points in common with toy libraries.

In Warsaw, there are two rehabilitation centers for children. Toys have an important role in the work with children with different disabilities. The toys are as necessary as the rehabilitation equipment itself. Because of this, toys are used not only during physiotherapy, occupational therapy or psycho-pedagogic reeducation, but the children and their families are also allowed to borrow toys and rehabilitation equipment to be used at home. The doctors, physiotherapists and psychologists also give advice to parents on how to play with their children at home. However, due to the financial situation in Poland the idea of toy libraries will have to wait to be developed.

3.29 Republic of Ireland

Barbara Haskins from the Irish Toy Library Group has sent us information about the toy libraries in the Republic of Ireland. Toy libraries are a relatively new concept in Ireland. The idea of starting an Irish Toy Library Group was born in October of 1987 when five people from Dublin toy libraries met and sent a questionnaire to people around the country who had shown interest in toy libraries. The first seminar of the Irish Toy Library Group was held in November 1988. Support in starting up the group was given by Glenys Carter, director of the National Toy Libraries Association in the United Kingdom, Joanna Von Levetzow of the Canadian Association of Toy Libraries and Roy McConkey, vice president of Play Matters. The objectives of the Toy Library Group are to provide support to other professionals, explore the possibility of reducing insurance premiums, decide on a common basis for the benefits of Toy Libraries, and draft a simple newsletter.

In the first newsletter of the Toy Library Group the activities at the first seminar were reviewed. To give a flavor of the content of the seminar and goals for the Toy Libraries, some of the topics of the speakers are briefly reviewed here. Barbara Haskins from Barnardo's spoke about the steps needed to set up a Toy Library.

Her advice was the following:

1 Research the need for a toy library in the area.
2 Organize a meeting to plan and allocate tasks.
3 Make decisions on who will use the toy library, the age group in focus, and on the need for a constitution for the group.
4 Investigate the appropriateness of the premises, such as safety, suitability for disabled, guards on heaters and a good toilet area with
5 Investigate the storage possibilities for toys and equipment.
6 Investigate the financial needs.
7 Consider membership/toy fee.
8 Organize the recording of the members and their loans.
9 See that there is a first aid box available.
10 See that there are enough volunteers to carry through the tasks of the toy library.
11 Plan the opening day!

Ann Christie from the Irish Preschool Playgroup Association talked about toy library benefits for community playgroups. The Kerry toy library was set up by the Irish Preschool Playgroup Association and serves playgroups in the area and parents referred by the Playleaders. It stocks mostly large and expensive toys that would be difficult for an average playgroup to buy. Ann Christies' community playgroup is organized co-operatively by parents of preschool children and other interested people. It is a totally self-funding group, and most of their money is spent on basic toys such as jig-saws, paints etc. The children in the playgroup have gained enormously from using the toy library, and the leaders are very happy with the experience. By using the toys from the toy library parents can experiment with toys before they buy them. At the toy library they can meet, discuss parenting methods and share ideas. Mothers who use the toy library can meet other mothers and playleaders and learn about play.

Kay Greene, who is a home visitor from St Michael's House, spoke about play and toys for children with special needs. She stressed that play has the same value for the child with special needs as for the ordinary child, and that the child with special needs should be given the opportunity to experience different kinds of play activities. She emphasized that play has to be enjoyable for all parties involved. The mood of the person who plays with a child is easily picked up by any child, and always affects the interaction.

Kay Greene stressed that helping a child with special needs to learn new play skills is similar to helping any small child. The main rules are to start at the right stage, match the toys to the play activity, give the child time to explore before the play starts, show the child, help the child physically if needed, praise and encourage and break the activity down into smaller steps if it is too difficult for the child.

In the spring of 1989 there were about 20 toylibraries in the Republic of Ireland. Most of them for parents and children. They operate from preschools, schools, social services, mobile toy libraries and assessment centers. They are run by professionals such as social workers, project workers as well as psychologists and volunteers.

Colette Murray from the Toy Library Group did a small survey of toy libraries in the Republic of Ireland in 1988. Roy McConkey has sent us the brief details from 12 libraries. This survey shows that children with handicaps and community groups are the most frequent users of toy libraries. Preschool children most often attend the toy libraries, but children up to the age of 12 are welcome in some.Parents are actively involved in 4 toy libraries. Often children and parents are referred to the Toy Libraries, but they also find out about them through public notices, and through playgroups. Most toy libraries operate weekly but a few on a daily or monthly basis. The location of the libraries differ. Some of them are in their own buildings, some in community or agency buildings and 4 are mobile. Most Toy Libraries are financed by an agency, and some have fees for users. The fee varies from 1 pound per year to 10 pounds per year.

The toy library movement appears to have a strong start in the Republic of Ireland as is manifested in the growth of toy libraries. The main goal is to provide preschool children with suitable toys, to promote play and the hidden value of play for families in the community.

3.30 Seychelles

Mette Brage and Lucy Mumuni, Swedish volunteers, report that the Seychelle islands, a collection of 115 atolls in the Indian Ocean, was home to an unusual toy library, a joint venture of the Swedish-Seychelles Association and the Seychelles Department of Planning and External Relations.

Seychelles has a strong commitment to supporting and developing the welfare of its children. Today there is a school for handicapped children in Victoria, a Rehabilitiation center for handicapped children over age fourteen, and an SOS Village for orphaned and abandoned children. In addition, there are 36 Creches, free of charge, for children ages 3 1/2 - 6 years. Thirty of these creches are on the main island, Mahe. There is also a well organized Mother-Child Clinic in each district. The clinics follow the children from birth up to the age of seven.

In 1986 The Swedish-Seychelles Association received a letter from the Department of Planning and External Relations of the Republic of Seychelles, requesting assistance to purchase educational toys for the creches. Discussions started between the Swedish Association and the Seychelles Government. The Association in Sweden presented the idea of setting up a Toy Library and a local Toy Production Unit. This was very positively received and with economical support from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) the project became a reality.

Two Swedish women came to Seychelles to run the new program, and in July 1989, the Toy Library began. The Ministry of Employment and Social Services took responsibility for the project. During the first months the focus was on finding suitable premises. It was very important to find premises easy for the families and their children to reach. An ideal site was found at Victoria Hospital close to a Speech and Hearing Assessment Center, an important counterpart to the Toy Library.

The plan was that after the initial two year project, the toy library would be independent of foreign aid, able to run alone.

The aims for the project were:

- * Find a suitable and experienced Seychelloise teacher.
- * Form a coordinating Toy Library Committee. This is necessary because the Toy Library needs to network between different ministries and departments.
- * Give information about the Toy Library in different ways
- * Support and advise parents with children who need special help for their development
- * Provide individual training of children at the Toy Library, in creche or during home visits
- * Schedule workshops and seminars for contact teachers and nurses involved in the project, at the Toy Library.
- * Co-operate with the Toy Production Unit in order to develop and suggest educational toys.
- * Plan for the future, to possibly include mother/child activities and parent groups.

Unfortunately, in the summer of 1990 a new letter from Mette Brage reported that a number of difficulties have arisen that have made it impossible to continue the planned project. The Swedish-Seychelles Association has, therefore, closed the project. The future is unclear, but the ground work for a thriving toy library project has been done, and hopefully the government will soon reinstate toy library services in the Seychelles.

3.31 South Africa

We have received material from two sources in South Africa: Edna C. Davies, administrative secretary of The South Africa Association for Early Childhood Educare (SAACE, affiliated to OMEP) has forwarded information from Mrs Dee Pullen, the first Vice-Chairman of SAAECE, who has documented information about toy libraries in South Africa, and Mrs. Colleen Denyer at the Sunshine toy library for handicapped children in Johannesburg. It seems possible that the activities described by the two sources may overlap to some degree, but because it is unclear where the overlap is, the information from the two sources is presented separately.

Mrs Denyer has submitted the addresses of toy libraries known to her in South Africa. She reports that there are 15 privately sponsored toy libraries, 2 attached to hospitals and 1 attached to a university. The first toy library in South Africa was started at the Red Cross children's hospital in 1974. It was started as a support to the pediatric assessment center. Today, toy libraries generally welcome all children younger than school-age. Some serve only handicapped children. At the toy libraries there are programs for children and parents. The libraries are staffed by professionals, mostly occupational therapists, as well as volunteers. The main objective of the toy libraries is to stimulate every child through play.

At the Fifth International Conference for Toy Libraries, Angela Frankel and Colleen Denyer described the program of the toy library in Eldoradopark. The following section is a summary of the article in the conference proceedings (1987, p. 38-39). The paper presented was titled "The role of the Mobile Toy Library at Present in the Underprivileged Rural and Urban Environment in South Africa, with particular reference to Eldoradopark Coloured Township".

Eldorado Park is situated in the Transvaal close to Johannesburg, and has a population of 150,000 to 200,000 people. The people who live there are coloured and have to live in this area because of racial legislation. It is described as typical in some ways of a marginal urban area in a developing country, with few community and recreational facilities, limited electricity, few shops, playgrounds and extremely poor transportational services. Eldorado Park is described as a poor community and facilities for handicapped children are lacking.

Angela Frankel and Colleen Denyer maintain that the people who live in Eldorado Park "have so many other priorities, that to talk of early intervention programs, and the importance of stimulation for a handicapped child, seems almost ludicrous at times". They also report that the poor transportation service and the unrest and the insecurity have disturbed the activities of the toy library. Despite those difficulties, the toy library has established a mobile service, with the following objectives:

- Individual assessment of children by an occupational therapist.
- Recommendation of appropriate toys to meet the children's needs.
- Guidance and advice to families, showing them how they can help their children become more independent.
- Simple home programmes to enable the parent to continue therapy and aid their child's development.
- Instruction in making home-made toys.
- Liaison with teachers in nursery schools and creches in Eldorado Park, to assist them in defining learning problems, and to assist them in referring children to the appropriate clinics, centers, etc.
- Train members of the community to assist and to take eventual responsibility for the entire project.

It is the hope of the authors that the mobile service will be able to help handicapped children, and that it also will build a foundation for a permanent toy library in Eldorado Park.

Most of the toy libraries described by Mrs Pullen are operated by Early Childhood Educare organizations and are linked to staff training and preschool back-up programmes.

The Durban Coastal Society for Early Childhood Educare maintains a cupboard fitted with shelves which contains puzzles, educational toys, and manipulative and construction toys. The contents of the cupboard, which are of good quality, are available for children in the age groups of two to six years. This toy library is portable, since it is fitted with handles and mounted on wheels, and is of a size suitable for transportation in vehicles. A cash deposit is paid for the use of the toy library and it is loaned out for a period of two months at a time. Other organizations in the Republic have the same or similar systems (e.g. Northern Transvaal Society for ECE and Grassroots in the Western Cape). These toy libraries are controlled by a facilitator or field worker.

The Pietermaritzburg Society for ECE and the Port Elizabeth Early Learning Centre (Both of which also are affiliated to SAAECE) have each adopted a system whereby toy libraries of home-made toys are accommodated in toy-bags and/or suitcases. In these two instances the toy libraries are loaned out on a monthly basis. These libraries are often borrowed by participants at Training Workshops. This type of system is not dependent on the availability of transport, as the bags/suitcases are even more readily portable than the system described above.

In Johannesburg and Pretoria toy libraries are available for handicapped children. These facilities are further supplemented by the availability of therapists who assist handicapped children in the use of appropriate toys for specific disabilities. Some hospitals - e.g. the Johannesburg Hospital and King Edward Hospital in Durban have toy libraries.

East London and Border Society for ECE and the Durban and Coastal Society for ECE also have book libraries. The book libraries are contained in shoulder bags each with 20 quality, graded preschool books. As the bags are easily carried, these book libraries are also circulated at Workshops in the same manner as the toy bags/ suitcases described previously.

It is the intention of the Northern Transvaal Society for ECE to introduce

- a shoulder bag system for books, plus
- a toy bag/suitcase toy library (containing graded puzzles and educational and construction toys).

It is planned to implement a deposit system for the loan of these libraries to cover wear and tear as well as replacement of toys broken or lost. In addition to the above, an organization known as READ, also maintains toy/booklibraries.

Mrs Pullen emphasize that there are other toy libraries which are run by organizations not affiliated to ECE, for instance the Union of Jewish Women, and municipal libraries, which provide a service to individual parents.

3.32 Sweden

Sweden has been a pioneering country in the development of lekoteks for children with handicaps. The word lekotek originated in Sweden. The word "lek" is Swedish and means play. The word "tek" is Latin and means collection. This made-up Swedish word has come to be used as a label for toy library services for children with handicaps all over the world. For example, in the United States there is a network of toy libraries for children with handicaps called Lekotek. Denmark, Germany and France are examples of countries that have adapted the word lekotek to their own language. The first lekotek in Sweden was started in 1963 by two parents of children with special needs. This lekotek served children with handicaps and children in need of special care and their parents.

The lekoteks in Sweden offer educational advice to parents of children with handicaps or to children with other special needs. Without charge, families borrow toys that are adapted to the child's needs for stimulation and training. Siblings of children with handicaps, who often suffer from being neglected while the child with handicaps receives so much attention, are a special focus at the lekotek and are able to borrow toys as well.

The philosophy of lekotek is that children learn through play. In play they learn about the world around them, about themselves and about other people. This is true for normally developing children as well as for children with handicaps. A handicap is, however, often an obstacle to play and to gaining experience about the world and people in a natural way. Lekotek considers it important that the child with a handicap is treated as a child first, with the same basic needs that all children have. The handicapped child's special needs should be considered secondary. Therefore, lekoteks provide children with handicaps with specially adapted play materials as well as the assistance of adults who are aware of their difficulties and know how to help them develop. The professionals at the lekoteks in Sweden are usually preschool teachers with special education training.

Another important part of a lekotek leader's job is to help integrate children with handicaps into preschool. In Sweden, all children with handicaps are integrated into community based child care, because every child has a right to attend preschool. However, the professionals staffing the preschools often do not have special education training, and are thus not always prepared to meet the special needs of a child with handicaps. The lekotek leader works with the child and the family directly, as well as offering guidance to the preschool teachers who have a handicapped child in their group. In most cases the parents of a handicapped child have early contact with the lekotek. This gives the lekotek leader the chance to help both the parents, the child and the preschool to prepare for the child's start at the preschool.

Lekotek provides the following services:

* The lekotek offers educational advice and support to families whose preschool children have physical, psychological or social handicaps.
* The lekotek offers information, advice and support concerning child development and is part of the treatment program for children with handicaps.
* The lekotek offers individual educational guidance, including the free loan of toys.
* The lekotek cooperates with other professionals providing treatment to children with handicaps, and works as a consultant to other agencies in the child care field.
* The lekotek follows and evaluates the development of toys andencourages the production of good quality playthings.

The first lekotek in Sweden was started and run with private funds provided by the Swedish Scout organization. Since then a number of private charity organizations have been engaged in building up lekoteks throughout the country. Today there are about 75 lekoteks in Sweden, most of them run by the county council. Some, however, are run by private organizations and by their communities.

During the past 5 years the treatment of children and teenagers with handicaps has been reorganized in Sweden. Each county council has a habilitation center that provides medical, psychological, educational, and social services. The lekoteks provide the educational component in many county councils. The lekotek leader has an important role in the inservice education of the preschool teacher and other professionals, such as physical therapists and occupational therapists. They also give advice in connection with the purchase of toys, and cooperate with manufacturers of toys. Lekoteks primarily provide support to preschool children and their families. Many lekoteks do not offer services to children after they start school at 7 years of age. Other lekoteks follow children even after they have started school.

Many lekoteks arrange group activities of various kinds based on the needs of the children and the parents. Some group activities are only for children, while others are only for parents, and some are for both. Today, when all children with handicaps are integrated into ordinary preschools, it may be important for children with handicaps to get to know other children with handicaps. Groups of children with handicaps can meet at the lekotek. Parents also have a great need to meet and talk with other parents, to learn from each other and share common experiences.

Lekoteks develop activities to meet the needs of client families, thus lekoteks differ from one another. The objective for the lekoteks is, however, the same throughout the country: to offer children and parents a feeling of belonging, competence and worth. Children with handicaps and children in need of special support must have help to be able to make use of play as a source of knowledge and experience. Play is an important resource that may help parents to actively participate in the habilitation of their child, and through play the lekoteks supply information, happiness and solidarity to the whole family. The basic philosophy of lekotek is to give each child with handicaps the opportunity to develop a full and enriching life.

In 1978 The Association of Swedish Lekoteks was founded. Today it has about 200 members. The aim of the association is:

- to keep informed of issues developing within the special education area and to disseminate this information to lekoteks.
- to enhance contact between the members in Sweden and to act as an intermediary between members in Sweden and other countries.
- to provide inservice training.
- to be an organization for contact with authorities and other organizations

The association also disseminates information about lekoteks and about the importance of play for children with handicaps. It has published written information and slides about lekoteks. Every year the association arranges inservice training for its members. Each Lekotek conference has a special theme. Last year's theme was "Communication - motor development and perception", and this year the theme will be "To interpret children's expressions - alternative communication".

3.33 Switzerland

In Switzerland the request for information about toy libraries was answered by Renate Fuchs, who is the chairperson of the Swiss Association of toy libraries.

There are about 260 toy libraries in Switzerland today. They are located in all parts of the country. The toy libraries are called "ludothek", because this word can be used in all four languages spoken in Switzerland. The first toy library was opened in 1972, and in 1980 the Swiss Association of toy libraries was founded. Because of the different languages in Switzerland, the logotype on their official letters is written in four languages: Association suisse des ludotheques, Verein der Schweizer Ludotheken, Assoziaziun da ludoteca Svizra and Associazione della ludoteche Svizzere.

The main objective for the toy libraries is to promote play in different forms. Everybody is welcome at the toy libraries, both old and young people and healthy as well as handicapped people. The organization of the toy libraries varies, and every toy library works independently. Almost all toy libraries are privately funded. Some are independent non-profit organizations, some are affiliated with other non-profit organizations such as parent-, women- or youth-organizations. Both professionals and volunteers work at the toy libraries. Some of the toy librarians are paid, but the great majority work as volunteers.

Mrs Fuchs reports that in some alpine valleys a transformed postal car distributes toys to the different villages. Other toy libraries are located in schools, kindergartens or in ordinary libraries. In some communities you can even find toy libraries in air raid shelters! There are a few toy libraries at hospitals. On average, a toy library circulates about 650 different toys and games.

The Swiss Association of toy libraries offers its members help in founding new toy libraries, offers regional meetings and training courses on differemt levels, tests toys, provides information about new toys on the market, and has a library with books and magazines concerning play and toys. The association also publishes the "LUDO JOURNAL" 3 times yearly. This journal focuses on toys and play. The Swiss Association of toy libraries is financed by its members and also by different funds for special projects.

3.34 Thailand

From Thailand Mrs Chaviwan Chungcharoen has answered the request and forwarded information about toy libraries and about a project called "Book and Toy library Project". From the material the following can be noted:

Games and toys are a fundamental part of any child's life and are their introduction to the world. Educators nowadays realize that more is gained from play than just physical fitness. A child's personality develops as he plays creatively. His language develops and his speech improves as play stimulates his imagination and his reasoning. Free, spontaneous play develops the capacity of a young child. To all young children then, their play is serious; their learning is urgent and will not wait.

For all these reasons, the Teacher Education Department, which directly involves educating and training both pre-service and in-service personnel for preschool education, and is responsible for providing academic service to communities, has decided to encourage all Teacher's colleges to set up Book and Toy Library projects. The aim is to improve the study and research of the departments involved in the college, and also to expand services on child development offfered to all kinds of communities, whether urban, rural, slum and/or the minorities.

Mrs. Chungcharoen brought the idea about toy libraries from Israel in the eary eighties. With financial support from the Teacher Education Department a guide book on Book and Toy library and a book named "Early Childhood Age in the Pre-School" were published for national wide distribution.The future objectives of the toy libraries in Thailand are as follows:

1 To encourage college teachers and students in doing research and study on child development.
2 To establish a model for establishing and running Book and Toy Library for other organizations and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.
3 To provide a range of carefully selected materials specifically aimed at stimulating and promoting the development of the child.
4 To provide Book and Toy lending services to the communities.
5 To increase parents' ability to select appropriate books, toys and play materials for children at different ages.
6 To educate parents in how their children learn through direct parent/child interaction using Book and Toy Library equipment.

Mrs Chungcharoen states that even though educators realize the importance of play and toys, in Thailand they have to accept that under the present depressed socioeconomic situation of the country there are millions of young Thai children who never or rarely have the opportunity to have suitable toys to play with. There are also a large number of parents who do not understand or know how to select safe and appropriate books and toys and play materials for their children at different ages.

3.35 United States

Toy libraries in the United States are operated with the belief that play and toys are essential to the healthy development of children. It is the goal of the libraries to make quality toys and play opportunities available to all children.

The first toy library in the United States - perhaps in the world was founded in Los Angeles, California in the 1930's. During that time of economic depression, a store owner realized that children were stealing toys from him because they simply didn't have any toys of their own. He set up a toy library in his garage. From this beginning came the Los Angeles Toy Loan. This program is still operating today, and indeed, is one of the country's largest toy library programs, loaning over 300,000 toys each year.

Today, there are over 350 toy libraries serving families in the United States.' Most toy libraries serve preschool children, but there are some that serve children of school age. Because the United States is such a large and varied country, there are many different kinds of toy libraries. The following brief descriptions of the different types of libraries give an idea of the diversity of toy libraries operating in the United States.

Public Libraries: An increasing number of public book libraries are building toy collections, which children and families may choose and borrow in much the same way as they borrow books. Toy libraries in public libraries are usually staffed by the children's librarian.

Toy Libraries for Children With Special Needs: There are a growing number of toy libraries just for children with disabilities. Many of these toy libraries are called Lekoteks, after the Scandinavian system of toy libraries for children with special needs. These centers are staffed by professionals who are trained to work with children with disabilities and their parents. Parent, child and professional spend a great deal of time together talking, playing, observing the child's progress and choosing toys that are just right to encourage the child's development.

Mobile Libraries: Mobile toy libraries serve many unique needs by bringing toys to centers that would otherwise not be able to come to a traditional toy library to borrow toys. Mobile toy libraries may circulate among 50 or 60 day care centers, libraries, and hospitals in several counties or states.The driver of the mobile toy library is often an early education specialist who offers an educational program to the adult users.

Adaptive Toy Libraries: Severely physically handicapped children and young adults often have a need for specially adapted toys, toys that can be operated with minimal physical skills. There are a number of toy libraries that specialize just in the loan of adapted toys and materials. Adaptive toy libraries are staffed by professionals specially trained to match a person's ability with adapted toys.

Public School Toy Libraries: Many school systems run toy libraries designed especially for teachers and parents. These toy libraries are usually directed by an early education specialist who works with both adults and children, helping them to select toys suited to the child's age and development.

Compuplay Centers:A new kind of lending library for children with special needs is beginning to spread in the United States. These centers are called Compuplay resource centers, and they provide computer classes, activities and services to children with special needs and their families. Many Compuplay centers provide software lending libraries for families. Families are able to preview software and then borrow it for home use. Some Compuplay centers also loan computers to families to use at home."

Regardless of how a toy library operates, all the toy libraries in the U.S. are not-for-profit, charity organizations. Some toy libraries charge a low cost annual membership fee, while others do not charge for their services. While some toy libraries are supported by state or local government, most toy libraries are always looking for new ways to raise money. Some toy librarians are paid, while others are volunteers.

Most toy libraries in the United States serve young children under eight years of age and their families, although some of the toy libraries serving people with disabilities continue to provide services into early adulthood. In addition to loaning toys, many toy libraries offer educational programs for parents, teachers and other professionals working with children. Special programs and entertainments for children are also a regular feature at the U.S. toy libraries.

The USA Toy Library Association is the national organization that unites the toy libraries in the U.S. Founded in 1984, the USA Toy Library Association has the following goals:

- to find and unite those individuals who share a positive attitude toward play and toys and are associated in particular with toys and toy libraries
- to develop standards for various models of toy libraries so that individuals wishing to establish a new toy library will have intelligent guidelines to follow
- to provide a national resource to all toy libraries, family centers, public libraries, schools, and other institutions
- to promote the establishment of toy libraries
- to sponsor periodic conferences on toys and play
- to join with corporations, agencies and individuals to promote the importance of appropriate toys and play.

The USA Toy Library Association publishes a newsletter, Child's Play, four times yearly. Child's Play is full of information about individual toy libraries, toy information, book reviews, and articles about play and toys. In addition, the Association publishes a directory of toy libraries in the U.S., has a short video entitled "Play is a Child's Work", and has produced a toy library operator's manual. All products are available from the Association headquarters.

3.36 Uruguay

The president of OMEP in Uruguay, Anunciacion Mazzella de Bevilacqua, and Edelma Cunnella de Florio, the secretary of OMEP, have answered the request for information about toy libraries in Uruguay.

There are many toy libraries in Uruguay, sponsored by the National Division of Preschool Education, part of the Ministry of Primary Education. Called the "Bank of Learning Materials", these toy libraries exist for the educational entertainment of children. These collections of materials are a lending service for schools and families.

Most of the toys are hand made and are available not just to teachers but also to families and communities. The toys are mostly educational in nature, but also include play and game materials. This is an early venture, and less formal materials are now being added to the collection.

The Private Center of Learning Materials and Games provides materials to private institutions that can purchase such materials. These toys are mainly to stimulate visual motor and psychomotor development.

The Education Division, through the Bank of Learning Materials, guides teachers and parents in the use of materials for learning and games as soon as they are enrolled in the lending library.

Frequent expositions are held to enrich the different centers for preschool education, fulfilling an instructional mission in this way.

The organization began in 1986, and today continues to expand, not only in the original sites in Montevideo, but now centers are taking root in the less developed parts of the country.

3.37 Zimbabwe

Information about toy libraries in Zimbabwe has been received from Ms. Sally Templer of Harare and from M. Herbert Nyabonda, Harare. The first toy library in Zimbabwe was established in Bulawayo in 1978 and the second one in Harare City Library in 1980. The last one was established with a financial contribution of 500 US Dollars from the Rotary Foundation. A small committee of people started the work, and later on they built their own premises for this purpose.

Today there are three toy libraries in Zimbabwe, in Harare, Mataro and Bulawayo. The main goal of the toy libraries is to provide meaningful play experiences for children with disabilities. The toy libraries are open one day a week. Children from institutions attend the toy library every second week, and preschool children and their parents can pop in at any time. There are no fees for visiting the toy library, but if the family wants to borrow a toy for a fortnight they pay 5 cents. The toy library receives no governmental support for this activity and the staff are mostly volunteers.

The toy libraries are autonomous organizations, and are run by professionals and volunteers. In most cases the professionals have an educational background. The toy libraries have the freedom and flexibility of serving all children with disabilities, and address a great variety of personal and group needs. Preschool children and school children with all kinds of handicaps are welcome to visit the toy library. For teenagers and adults there is a restriction, as the only group of older disabled people that can attend the toy library are those with mental retardation. The toy libraries can offer group activities for children and for parents and children.

Both Ms. Templer and Mr. Nyabonda believe that there will be more toy libraries in Zimbabwe in the future, as toy libraries have an important role in the development and education of children with disabilities. Organizations such as Rotary and Lions have been generous with money and assistance. Today more than 400 children are involved in the programs. Future plans include a mobile toy library to serve the rural areas of Zimbabwe.

Chapter 4

4. DISCUSSION

At the ouset of the project, it seemed that it would be difficult to describe a toy library in general terms. After going through the material this impression has been confirmed. Each toy library or toy library system is uniquely influenced by the special conditions, needs and development of its particular country, and is colored by that country's social and cultural system. Sometimes a toy library is a product of a region, a community or even the creativity of a special person. However, all toy libraries acknowledge the immense value of play for the growing generation.

The themes for the international conferences give a good description of a "common philosophy" of toy libraries:

* "Toy Library Is Teamwork"
* "Toy Library In Society"
* "Play Is A Language"
* "Sharing through Play"
* "Play Is For All".

The contributors to this publication agree that optimal development in children stems from good play experiences with other people in combination with appropriate play materials and toys. The themes suggest that a general goal for all toy libraries is to nurture good and healthy development through play. Toy libraries are beneficial to children and families in society in this respect, building on teamwork to achieve their goals. Play and toys are the instruments used to share experiences and to communicate, and provides an introduction to social relations.

The general goal shows the universality of the concept. The flexibility of the concept toy library allows for many diverse formats, allowing for adaptability to local conditions and needs. It should be recognized that the frames of reference differ between countries and cultures, and also that the history of the toy libraries varies. This may be a barries to good communication and understanding. An analysis of the background to the toy library movement in the historical, economic, political and social system of each particular country would have been necessary to make a complete analysis of the philosophies of the toy libraries in each country. Although it is difficult to try to describe a typical toy library, it is possible to recognize some major types of toy libraries. In table 3, the toy libraries in this study are categorized according to several variables.

The table shows that there are more than 4500 toy libaries and lekoteks in 31 countries on all continents. Of the countries with toy libraries and lekoteks there is an overrepresentation of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, reflecting the fact that toy libraries and lekoteks originated in these societies.

Table 3. Focus of toy libraries

Country (#)	n/o	school	leko-tek	pre-school	mobile	parent guidance	culture	games	group	s/g
Argentina (+)	n	x	x	x		x			x	
Australia (600)	o	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Belgium (138)	o	x		x	x		x	x	x	
Brazil (+)	o	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Canada (300)	o	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
China (8)	n			x	x				x	
Denmark (40)	o		x			x			x	
The Faroe Islands (1)	o		x			x				
Fiji (0)										
Finland (307)	o		x	x	x	x				x
France (500)	o		x			x	x	x	x	
Ghana (1)	o	x		x	x				x	
Great Britain (1100)	o	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Hong Kong (10)	o	x	x	x		x			x	x
Hungary (0)										
Iceland (4)	o		x			x				
India (10)	o	x			x	x	x	x	x	
Israel (+)	n	x	x	x		x		x	x	
Italy (50)	o					x	x	x	x	
Jamaica (0)										
Japan (360)	o		x			x			x	x
Jordan (1)	n		x			x			x	
Korea (1)	o		x			x			x	x
New Zealand (60)	o		x			x			x	x
Northern Ireland (70)	o	x		x				x	x	
Norway (200)	o		x			x				x
Philippines (0)										
Poland (0)										
Republic of Ireland (20)	n	x		x	x	x			x	x
Seychelles (0)										
South Africa (18)	o		x		x	x				
Sweden (75)	o		x	x		x			x	x
Switzerland (260)	o	x		x	x		x	x	x	
Thailand (+)	o	x		x		x		x		
United States (350)	o	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Uruguay (+)	n	x		x				x	x	
Zimbabwe (3)	o		x			x			x	

(#) = number of toy libraries
(+) = no information of number of toy libraries
n/o = new/old, new are those started after 1985
school = situated at or connected to schools
lekotek = with therapeutic/educational programs for children with disabilities
preschool = situated at or connected to preschools
mobile = unit in a bus or van that drives to the users
parent guidance = offers services to parents and families
culture = emphasis on the social and cultural value of play
games = includes games in the services
group activities = provides group activities for children, children and parents
s/g = integration of specialist and generic services

Many toy libraries were established in the sixties and seventies, and only 6 "formal" toy library systems have been established since 1985. Six countries have expressed a wish to start toy libraries (Fiji, Hungary, Jamaica, Philippines, Poland, and Seychelles). Some of these countries have current activities that are similar to, may grow from, or benefit from adopting the toy library concept. Some of those countries report financial difficulties as a reason for not being able to realize their ambition of starting a toy library. The information about the number of toylibraries is based on the material received. However, it seems that once again in the 90's there are new programs being founded. At the fifth international conference of toy libraries in Turin, November, 1990, representatives from toy libraries in Libya, Jugoslavia, Germany, Portugal and Madagascar participated. Those countries are not represented in the present investigation.

The number of toy libraries in a country varies from 1 to 1100, and in some countries no information about the number of toy libraries was given. Countries with a large number of toy libraries (more than 200) are Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Japan, Norway, Switzerland and the United States. These countries often have toy libraries for both handicapped and non-handicapped children. Examples of countries with one or a few toy libraries are the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Jordan, Korea, and Zimbabwe. In those countries the toy libraries are almost exclusively lekoteks, meaning they are educational and therapeutic centers for children with disabilities.

At least three major types of toy libraries emerge:

- Toy libraries that are community oriented and provide toy loan and advice and other services to any child or family
- Lekoteks that cater almost exclusively for children with special needs.
- Toy libraries that have a social and cultural program and provide recreational facilities for children of all ages.

Community oriented toy libraries are for example found in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Great Britain, Australia and Finland. However, in those countries there are also toy libraries for children with special needs. Community based toy libraries often offer the families possibilities to receive advice on play and toys and offer new learning activities for children.

In Canada there are more than 200 toy libraries open to all children. The toy libraries are operated on a public lending model or a community oriented parent-child resource model. They are often part of a parent educational program aimed at teaching parents to play and use toys effectively in order to foster development and interaction and other skills such as cognitive and language skills.

In the United States an increasing number of public libraries are building up a toy collection where children and families may borrow toys just like they borrow books.

In New Zealand most toy libraries are community based. The focus is on the parent as the child's first and most important teacher.

In Australia the main objective for community based toy libraries is to provide play opportunities and play materials, and to give advice and support to parents and children.

In Finland almost every community has a toy library that lends toys to the family daycare homes.

In Great Britain a growing number of toy libraries open their doors to all children in the area, and include special toys for special needs children in their stock. The premises are often used for different activities for example; providing toys for babies; pensioneers' clubs; and lunches.

Most toy libraries offer different kinds of group activities, either for children or for children and parents together. In some countries toy libraries have grown into parent child resource or support centers, particularly in Canada, Australia. The focus in these centers is on building informal networks that may help families in everyday life. Through play activities, communication and cooperation is implemented between children, parents and families. This then becomes a foundation for mutual support and friendship. These toy libraries provide services for children regardless of their ability. An important function of these toy libraries is to provide parents with a forum for discussing child rearing.

Community based toy libraries have an important social function, and their development is an offshoot of the rapid social changes in those industrial countries during the last 20 years. Family patterns have shifted. Today, small families are common, and the extended family has become the exception in much of the Western world. The rate of divorce has increased, and new family constellations are more common. All this has increased the demand for support services, and toy libraries are one of the important forms of available support. Perhaps it is a sign of the time that young families need new possibilities to meet each other, to be able to receive advise from each other as well as from people with experiences of children and also that children need places to meet.

The second category of toy libraries mentioned is that of **lekotek for children with disabilities**. In all, 21 countries have adopted the lekotek concept. Half of these limit services to children with disabilities while the other half provide toy libraries for non-disabled children as well. In countries providing services for children with disabilities only, there seems to be a move towards integrating specialized services with more generic services. The trend seems to be to expand the services to community preschools and schools. Lekotek are for example found in all the Scandinavian countries, in Japan, Korea, Australia, Brazil, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and France.

The lekotek most often provide services for the very young child with special needs. The interaction between the lekotek leader and the child is of major importance, and stimulating the child to own activity is seen as vital. Helping the child to discover his or her own abilities and making it visible to the parents is a major goal for the services. Development is seen as gradual, coming in small steps, and it is the task of the lekotek leader to see to that development progresses. Assessment and treatment is seen as teamwork, and cooperation with other instances that care for special needs children is part of the services. Often lekotek leaders have a great area to cover, and it is not uncommon that she drives 200 kilometres to visit a family. Iceland is unusual as it comes to lekotek services. It is the only country that has passed a law where services from the lekotek are included.

The third category of toy libraries is aimed at the **toy library as a cultural social and and recreational center.** Recreational and social activities are offered to children of all ages. Examples of such toy libraries are found in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy.

The Italian toy library movement builds on the concept of play as a mean for deep change in society and emphasizes the cultural traditions of play as opposed to an "international" way of playing using commercialized toys. At the toy library everybody can try, make and lend toys and games. The toy libraries also are places for festivals and artistic activities.

In Hungary, there are toy exhibitions, workshops and toy making sessions reminiscent of the Southern European toy libraries. The cultural value of play and toys is stressed, and the aim is to discover, save and enrich Hungarian play and toy culture.

To sum up, the toy libraries in Southern Europe are notable for having a primary function of providing social and cultural meeting places for people of different ages. In these countries, both play and games are seen as important for the development of the child and for people in society at large. There is an emphasis on traditional toys and games rather than "international" commercialized toys and games. The making of toys is also part of these programs. Young and old people gather to attend workshops on different themes to make traditional toys together. The discovery of differences between people and creativity is a focus for these toy libraries, and the toy library's function is as a place for socializing without imposed limits. The recreational need of older children are especially provided for at these toy libraries.

Perhaps one should add a fourth broad category: i.e. the kind of toy library that only functions as a **toy lending library**. An example of this is the Los Angeles County Toy Loan. It has been in continuous operation since the 30's. It is also the largest toy library in the world, with more than 35.000 toys to lend. All toys are donated and repaired by volunteers. It loans toys to poor children and have a program to encourage these children to return the toys. After a certain number of toys are succesfully returned the child gets to choose a toy to keep.

This study shows that toy libraries are as diverse as are the worlds countries and children. The differences are numerous, and a few will be commented below:

Ability: Toy libraries serve children of all abilities. Some exist just for children with disabilities, such as the Swedish lekoteks, while others serve anyone in the community, such as the British toy libraries. Increasingly, those libraries that used to serve only children with special needs are moving towards including normal children (particularly child care providers), and those who previously served only normal children are including children with special needs, whether physical, mental, and social.

Age: Toy libraries serve children of all ages. Worldwide, this range is birth to old age. Most countries offer services to preschool age children, but some offer programs that include older people. Both Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain are developing exciting new programs for adults. However, from the table it is not evident which age groups of children the toy libraries/lekoteks serve. From the country by country descriptions it is clear that preschool children are the main recipients of services from the lekoteks, and that toy lending libraries and toy libraries that offer cultural activities often cater to children of all ages. Sometimes also for children at the age of 99 (e.g. Italy).

Group versus single: Some toy libraries offer services to individuals on an appointment basis, such as lekoteks, and others to informal groups of parents and children who happen to drop by at the toy library at the same time. Worldwide, there is a definite trend for providing group activities, whether planned for parents and children together, parents alone in a group or groups of children or teenagers. These groups provide both companionship and support in a fast changing world.

Role of toys: Toy libraries use toys in many ways, and in fact it is one of the few common points to all toy libraries that they do indeed use toys. For some toy libraries, such as those in Norway the toys per see are seen as less important than the play and interactions that toys promote. On others, such as the Los Angeles toy loan, the loan of toys is the sole purpose of the toy libraries. In India, part of the function of the toy library is to provide a place where people - adults and children - can come to build toys. In many of the Southern European countries toy libraries, such as in Belgium and Italy, the function of the toys is partly to tie children and adults into their cultural heritage. The concept and value of toys, and the criteria for "good" toys varies. In some toy libraries the cultural value of traditional toys and games is emphasised. In others the educational value of toys is in focus. Several less affluent countries concentrate on home-made play materials.

Toy loan: While all toy libraries use toys, not all toy libraries loan toys. Typically, in many poor areas, the toy library is a center to come to, to play with toys, not to borrow them. In Brazil, for example, there is a toy library in a circus that travels in the interlock of the country. Here, the children come to play, not to borrow toys.

Parents: Almost all toy libraries involve parents in their programming. The toy library exists as much for the parent as for the child, and parents support groups, counceling sessions and informal social gatherings play an important part in the life of the toy library. Parent training is also a strong feature of toy libraries.

Toy librarians: The range of educational qualifications of the people working in toy libraries is vast. Some systems, i.e. Sweden, use only degreed professionals who have received extensive specialized training. Others, i.e. Japan, use parents who, having experienced the special caring offered by toy library staff, want to volunteer to help other parents. In other countries the toy librarians may have a formal education as a teacher, a recreation and leisure teacher or other similar professions. Toy librarians are both paid and unpaid, but all are professionals doing an important job in their community. Volunteer does not mean amateur.

Funding: Toy libraries are funded in an incredible varirty of ways. The range is enourmous, with the Scandinavian countries probably at the most wonderful end, receiving plentiful government funding. Many, many others struggle for their funding. In South Korea, they hold a jumble sale in the road once a month. In China, a remote toy library that serves the nomadic children, who are on the move with their parents in the grasslands, were generoulsy given a herd of cattle by the local government. A woman's auxiliary of the toy library was formed to tend the cattle, all proceeds going to support the toy library. It does seem that, worldwide, almost everyone struggles for funding.

Facilities: There are toy libraries in city halls, there are toy libraries in schools, preschools, and in hospitals. Some toy libraries deliver their services in vans, going to the homes of the children they serve. In the Faroe Islands, toys are loaned by mail. Great Britain has a great number of play buses. The Rainbow Fleet in Oklahoma, United States, operates out of a number of rainbow colored vans, and part of the job of the toy librarian is to learn to drive a big bus.

Mission: Even in the missions of the toy libraries there are many differences. At the heart of all toy libraries is a belief that play and toys make a difference to childrens' development. In highly developed countries, toy libraries enhance childrens' development. In poor countries, toy libraries may provide a child's only stimulation and encouragement.

These differences, while vast, are not fundamental. The two fundamental essences of toy libraries is that they all use play and toys to nurture childrens development. Thus, play is the keyword for all toy libraries and the value of play is central. While it is possible to enter into a philosophical discussion about the definition of play, and refer to different schools of thought as a foundation for a theoretical definition, people who work in toy libraries would all probably give a very personal definition of play: " play is a child's work"; "play is communication"; "play is fun"; "play is spontaneous pleasurable activity"; "play is learning". Dr Ada Schermann of Toronto, who spoke at the opening ceremony of the Fourth International Conference of Toy Libraries (Cohen & Levetzow, 1987) , claimed that play "is something that defies definition" (p. 1). Man are social creatures and has always engaged in play and will continue to do so, and children need to play to develop. It may be as simple as that. Play can be seen as a basic human function needed for the development of children, culture and society.

In toy libraries, play and toys are strongly associated. Toys are necessary for play, and a starting point for cognitive and creative activity. However, toys are not an end in themselves. Toys are tools that encourage and promote play. In many toy libraries it is emphasized that the right material at the right time encourages a child's development. At the lekoteks for disabled children toys are used as instruments for change in an educational or therapeutic program. The challenge for the lekotek worker is to choose toys that engage the child at an appropriate developmental level. At some toy libraries the toy librarians help the parents to select appropriate toys and playmaterials, and offer parents and children opportunities to experiment with carefully chosen toys before they buy them.

In countries that are in the process of starting toy libraries the acquisition of toys may present a problem in itself. Finances and the possibilities for funding varies, and these issues are resolved in different ways. Banks and private cooperations may finance the start of toy libraries. Volunteers may work at fund raising in various ways. The government or community may assist in the process of getting started, or international organizations may be involved in establishing toy libraries. Charity organizations also play an important part in funding of toy libraries. A good example of the way culture influences financing is the situation reported from a rural part of China, where authorities donated a small herd of cattle as a basic fund for starting a toy library.

The very word toy libraries has been questioned, since today the main task of the toy library/lekotek movement is not only to lend toys and equipment but above all to support children and families for a good life in a rapidly changing world. There are few toy libraries in developing countries, and indeed it is difficult to talk about the importance of play when children are living under poor conditions and are starving. But, once basic needs of food and shelter are met, play will become a need, and toy libraries are an exceptionally effective way to provide for this need.

In "The state of the world's children - 1990" (Grant, 1990), published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the under-five mortality-rate (U5MR) is the principal indicator of the level of well-being of children. When considering this indicator it is interesting to note that toy libraries have most often been established in countries where children live well. Dr Roy McConkey of Ireland closed the Fourth International Conference of Toy Libraries by stating that toy libraries "are an artefact of a developed, affluent society but that should not be the case, because what we have to offer...is something more than mere toys" (Cohen & Levetzow, 1987, p. 49). From this survey of toy libraries around the world it is evident that toy libraries have much more to offer than toys. Above all it seems that the social contribution of toy libraries for children and families is becoming more and more focused. Toy libraries work to give children possibilities for playing and developing to their fullest potential, and offer families and friends possibilities for communicating fully through positive play experiences.

1990 was an important year for the children in the world. The first World Summit for Children was held at the end of September, and the Convention of the Rights of the Child has been brought before the General Assembly of the United Nations. The convention is the first agreement among the nations of the world on the legally defined rights of the child. One of the three main areas of the convention is focused upon development :

> *"To allow every individual the chance to develop to his or her full potential, the Convention contains provisions relating to the child's right to education, to rest and leisure, to freedom of expression and information, and to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It also stipulates that parents shall give 'due weight' to the views of children, in accordance with their age and maturity."(p. 6).*

Toy libraries may play an important role in promoting this provision. One important future task of the international toy library movement will be to find ways to encourage and invite developing countries into the network of toy libraries.

A toy library is a wonderful notion because it is infinitely flexible, and adapts to the social, economical and cultural realities of its community. Toy libraries are evolving institutions, because they are responsive to community needs. Indeed, this is the beauty of toy libraries, once a need is defined, the toy library designs a program to meet that need. It is this inherent flexibility, though, that makes it difficult to define what a toy library is. Just as in play, there is no "correct" way to be a toy library.

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APPENDIX 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEKOTEKS/TOYLIBRARIES IN ....(COUNTRY)

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1. How, by whom, and when was the first lekotek/toylibrary started in your country?

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2. What is the main objective of your lekotek?

---

3. The organization of the lekoteks/toylibraries in my country is the following:

---

4. Write down the number of lekoteks/toylibraries known to you in your country.

---

5. The following categories are welcome to our lekoteks/toylibraries. Cross the alternatives that are applicable.

Children	School children	Teenagers	Adults	Handicapped			
				Children	Schoolchildren	Teenagers	Adults
....	....	....	....	....	....	....	......

6. The following group-activities are available at our lekoteks/toylibraries. Cross the alternatives that are applicable.

For children	For parents	For parents and children
....	....	....

7. The lekoteks/toylibraries in my country can be found in the following localities. Cross the alternatives that are applicable.

Preschool	School	Social Services	Hospital	Mobile Library	Assessment Center
....	....	....	....	....	....

If other describe shortly

---

8. The lekoteks/toylibraries in my country are run by the following staff. Cross the alternatives that are applicable.

Professionals	Volunteers	Both professionals and volunteers
....	....	....

If professionals, describe kind of profession in general

Thanks for your valuable help!
Please send this form to:
WRP International
Greta Hellberg
Sportstugevägen 13
S-182 35 Danderyd
Sweden

INTERNATIONAL WRP

My name is:......................
Adress:..........................
....
....
Profession.......................

HÖGSKOLAN I JÖNKÖPING
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF JÖNKÖPING

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